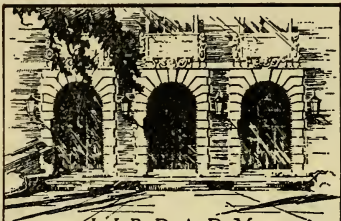


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CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE.”

I do no fors, I speke right as I mene.

CHAUCER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1844.



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CONSTANCE D'OYLEY.

CHAPTER I.

Sir, a whole history.

* * * * *

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba
That he should weep for her?

HAMLET.

And thus when old affections are wore out
Or when their stream is broken by mischance,
Your heart will no more echo to their griefs
Than with a sad surprise, if they be sudden.

ANON.

“At last?” said Mary, as she looked up
from her book.

“Now this is what I call injustice,” said
Constance, sitting down beside her. “I
have been with Mrs. Agatha to the school ;

then we went back to her cottage, and I was seized with a desire to dig up one of her flower beds, which I accomplished, much to her amusement ; since which performance I have written three letters for papa, and here I am."

"By the bye," said Mary, "did you ever come to an understanding with Lord Bevis, how much you would allow him to serve your papa? I recollect our finding you in tears one—"

"Stop—stop ;" said Constance, "I am quite ashamed of that morning, and I was nearly as silly when first he came hither. I was very cross one day because he had been reading Sophocles to papa—which I could not do if I wished it."

"And what was his defence? I suppose he made one."

"Yes. He said in that mournful way he has, that I had a thousand means of showing my love for my father ; and that he trusted I should not be reluctant to grant him the power of proving how grate-

ful he was for his long and tried friendship."

"And you?"

"Oh! I cried."

"It certainly is very odd," said Mary, musing, "with one common interest, too—"

"That we have not made a match!" said Constance, laughing; "why, my dear Mary, we know each other's history—"

"Yes; but so does—" Mary stopped short.

"So does—oh! go on, dear."

"I was thinking of something else. So, my dear Constance, spare those skeins of silk, and let me help you to put the flower-stands in order."

"Ay, that reminds me," said Constance, running to the glass, "that my exploits may not have improved my toilet! What do you think, Mary, dear—shall I alter my costume?"

"Not unless you expect any particular visitor," returned Mary. "That soft white dress is a great favourite of mine, and by

some wonderful management on your part, you have contrived to escape all traces of your occupation."

Constance seemed a long time occupied in pulling off her gloves ; at last she looked up.

" Mary !"

" I thought something important was coming," returned her cousin.

" Were you ever a fool ?"

" Very often, I dare say."

" But I mean in—in—"

" In particular. Not that I know of. Bring me to confession on any one point, and I'll tell you."

" Why it is very silly, I know ; but I really could not help it. Sir Morgan was very civil at dinner yesterday, and I was thinking of something else—"

" Somebody else—yes," interposed Mary.

" So as I was going away, he asked me if I should be at home this morning."

" Well ?"

" I said, no !"

“That was plain, my dear, at any rate !”

“Do you think he will take the hint ?”

“I do not. He has too much at stake to be easily disconcerted.”

“Then what am I to do ?” asked Constance.

“Bide your time,” returned Mary ; “only taking care not to say no, until you are asked.”

“Of course not,” returned Constance, leaning from the window. “There is Lord Bevis in the flower garden. Lord Bevis ! will you bring me in some of that scarlet honeysuckle, and a whole handful of azalias, and two or three yellow briar roses, if you please ; and now, Mary, I will accept your offer about the flower stands.”

Lord Bevis soon made his appearance with the requisite blossoms ; and shortly after Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley came in. Mrs. D'Oyley sat on a sofa with her embroidery ; Mary joined her uncle, that she might read to him some passages in a book

which she thought would please him ; and Constance, after bringing her father two or three of her finest flowers, took her place at a marble table and began her task of arrangement. Lord Bevis, lounging in the depths of an easy chair, and playing indolently with a paper cutter, was watching her progress with great interest.

“What a great deal of coquetry there is in that occupation,” said Lord Bevis, after looking on for some time in silence.

“There is only one coquette in this house,” returned Constance, without raising her head, “and I am sorry to be obliged to say, that one is a man.”

“There never was so unjust an accusation, if it alludes to me,—since the days of—do help me to an illustration.”

“Shall I ask Mrs. Agatha for one?” said Constance. “I am sure the way you flirt with her every time she enters this house, is perfectly alarming.”

“Do you hear that, Miss Hilton?” asked Lord Bevis.

“Yes,” returned Mary, “but Constance manages those things so badly ! She ought to say all that behind your back ; but she will never be a woman of the world.”

“I have been told that before,” said Constance, stooping over her flowers.

Here a servant threw open the door with some unintelligible announcement. She did not turn round, but asked Lord Bevis what the man said.

“No, don’t move !” cried Lady Bohun, as she entered, “don’t stir a finger !—it is just so that I would have your portrait taken ;—pray agree with me, my dear Mrs. D’Oyley. I am sure, Mr. D’Oyley, you are already stronger than when you were among us. Miss Hilton, you were very tantalizing yesterday, not to join our party—there, you tiresome creature, you have spoiled the attitude ; but it was perfect, was it not, Captain Bohun ?”

Constance started, and blushed at his name, but he gave no direct reply to the

demand made on his complimentary powers ; he merely came forward and hoped she was quite well.

“ Quite well,” she thanked him.

She left her flowers, and sat down beside Lady Bohun. Captain Bohun went to speak to Miss Hilton ; and Constance noticed that he seemed very much amused, and Mary very energetic as the conversation proceeded.

“ I have so much to tell dear Mr. D'Oyley about our new Bishop,” said Lady Bohun, rising. “ I will arrange with you about the Archery meeting before I go, you may be sure.”

“ I am sure you do not go before luncheon,” returned Constance, “ and let us remember to try that duet together.”

“ Of course,” said Lady Bohun, “ if I can persuade my cavalier to wait so long, —though on second thoughts I shall not consult him in the matter. I tried, as we came along, to make him confess what a

delightful change had taken place at Leyton since he was here last, but not a word could I extract from him."

Captain Bohun looked round at this mention of his impracticable nature, and Constance fancied that she could decypher the smile which passed over his features.

"No," she thought, "whatever might be his opinion, he would not tell her of it, for I know he does not like her;—but that is no reason why he should not come and talk to me." So she had recourse to Lord Bevis. "Now, do you mean to amuse me or not," she said, "because I shall go back to my flowers directly, if you have nothing to say."

"Bear in mind my unlucky sex," returned Lord Bevis. "I *have* nothing to say; but if I were a woman, that very circumstance would make me talk the faster."

"Oh! we are to have a quarrel then!" said Constance, quietly.

“I hope not; let us change the subject. How is Mrs. Dickson? I saw you walking in the direction of the school.”

“Not very well,” replied Constance. “She is fretting because her brother is out of employment; and she has been making such demands on my sympathy! I cannot understand that confiding system!”

“No,” said Lord Bevis, “I would not complain, unless I were quite sure of being pitied. But this is by no means a popular trait of character. People never will give you any sympathy, but they are very angry if you don’t ask them for it.”

“That is one of your Rochefoucault maxims,” returned Constance; “but before I dispute it, tell me if you have tried Mary’s horse this morning?”

“I did.”

“And you found him quiet?”

“Perfectly—by this token, that as I rode past your windows, I tried to make him show off—in vain.”

“Do you hear that, Mary? By the

bye, I knew I had a note to write. Would you find me a seal, Lord Bevis?"

"Might I suggest that you have one on your finger?"

"True," said Constance, laughing, as she drew off her ring; "by the bye, there is a long history attached to this seal, which I will tell you one day. There—did you ever know any body write so quickly as I do?"

"How much praise do you want, Miss D'Oyley? Because I am quite ready to come forward with any amount."

"I shall come back to scold you," cried Constance; "but I think Lady Bohun has finished her account of the Bishop, and I am so very anxious to try a shot with her before luncheon."

"Then I may go in search of your bow, and your guard, and your quiver, and tassel, wherever they may severally be?"

"War, war! no peace! is your motto this morning," returned Constance; "but I will trouble you to collect my weapons,

and bring them out before the cedar tree on the lawn."

It so happened that Captain Bohun and Constance were the last to leave the room ; therefore they found themselves walking side by side along the lawn. The rest of the party were a little in advance.

" You seem already to be intimate with Lady Bohun," said her companion.

" Yes," returned Constance, " she has been very kind to me, and women form intimacies sooner than men."

A short silence followed; which was broken by Constance exclaiming in a tone of genuine admiration, as Lady Bohun turned and beckoned her to come on : " What a beautiful complexion she has !"

" Oh ! very," returned Captain Bohun, turning to examine a flower as he spoke, Constance fancied to conceal a smile.

" It is very odd now," she said, " that you men can never believe one woman in earnest when she praises another ; you pay me a particular compliment to suppose

I cannot admire a complexion ten times better than my own !”

For Constance, whose unpractised eye could readily detect the coarse powder that hung on the cheek of Lady Hernshaw, was quite ignorant of the more delicate cosmetics with which Lady Bohun refreshed her waning youth.

“ I believe you capable of every thing that is generous,” returned her companion.

“ Except in the present instance !” said Constance looking up and laughing. “ But what do you think of this lawn ? Lady Bohun has been advising me to cut a circle of flower-beds in the middle of it.”

“ Lady Bohun generally prefers art to nature,” said Captain Bohun quietly.

“ And what is your opinion on the subject ?”

“ I should hold it little short of sacrilege to disfigure this smooth turf. By the bye, I commend your choice of an archery

ground ; I suppose you have already made good progress in the use of the bow : you have an excellent example before you. Lady Bohun is, or was, famed throughout the county ; I believe she vanquished Sir Guy by her skill in archery, and—her complexion !”

“ But what an inducement that is !” cried Constance ; “ I wonder how soon I shall be enabled to try for a prize at the meeting ? Why there is Sir Morgan actually under the trees !—How in the world did you get in ? I said I was not at home.”

“ With such an inducement ;” exclaimed Sir Morgan, “ I could scale the walls of a convent to obtain a sight of you !”

“ But I really don’t wish you to witness my awkward attempts at shooting,” said Constance ; “ I would rather you had come at any other time.”

“ It is impossible that you could be awkward.”

“ Yes I could, comparatively,” said Constance taking her bow from Lord Bevis. “ Now, find me a glorious arrow, one that will hit the bull’s eye.”

Lord Bevis walked over to the target and offered to hold a crown piece for her to aim at.

“ You know I will not,” cried Constance ; “ be so good as to move out of the way—farther—nearer the tree ! Now do look at him,” said she impatiently to Sir Morgan, “ I shall be sure to hit him ; ten to one I hit anything within three yards of that target !”

“ Have you not done that already ?” asked Sir Morgan in a low tone.

“ Oh ! you mean allegorically,” returned Constance fixing her arrow ; but she did not condescend to enter into any farther explanation of the subject.

The party shot, and laughed, and talked, until luncheon was announced. Sir Morgan overwhelmed Constance with praises of her grace and dexterity ; but, as she

said, facts were stubborn things ; no compliments could conjure her arrows an inch nearer to the bull's eye. She had no doubt she looked very graceful, but the less people talked of her skill the better !

Sir Morgan disputed and argued, and appealed from one to another. Lady Bohun encouraged the conversation, and she was a clever talker. Lord Bevis teased Constance, and she in turn abused him, while Mary and Captain Bohun looked on like spectators at a play.

“ If you won't talk nonsense, you ought not to listen to it,” said Constance turning to Captain Bohun. “ It is dreadful to have one sitting by, measuring our folly ! Do oblige me by saying something very ridiculous.”

“ I should be so happy to obey you,” said Captain Bohun laughing ; “ but you know extremes are hard to hit : nonsense is really difficult.”

“ Oh ! if you respect our proceedings, I am satisfied,” said Constance ; “ I was

afraid you might be looking down upon us."

"That is your post-bag I know," said Lady Bohun, as a servant brought it into the room. "Now if you don't open your letters directly, I shall order my carriage and fly; I hate the slightest suspense myself in such things—so give me a paper and let me look over the fashions."

"But I have no letters," said Constance; "it looks so undignified, so common, does it not, Sir Morgan? There is one for papa; I'll let you read it to him, Lord Bevis. I do think Harry might write a little oftener. How I envy you, Mary, with half a dozen sheets in your hand just as if you were a secretary of state!"

"Will you allow me to write to you, Miss D'Oyley!" exclaimed Sir Morgan.

"No," replied Constance; "I don't wish to play at having correspondents. I shall take up the Times, and tell you the latest intelligence from China."

She glanced down the columns for a few

moments, when on a sudden she clasped her hand over her forehead, and hastily left the room, dropping the newspaper as she went.

“I wish you would follow Miss D'Oyley,” said Captain Bohun to Mary, “I fear she is ill.”

“That cannot be,” said Mary; “Constance is not in the habit of falling ill on so slight a notice, she must have seen something to startle her in that paper. Give it me.”

Captain Bohun picked it up, and Mary commenced an eager search among its contents. “‘Recent disturbance at Canterbury. Frightful accident on the Birmingham Railway. Singular occurrence near Reading. Late thunderstorm.’ I do wonder now—oh! good Heaven!—look here. ‘Yesterday the —— Hotel, Southampton, was thrown into confusion by the death of — Forde Esq. late of Elmsforde in the county of Kent. The unfortunate gentleman terminated his existence by poi-

son, it is supposed, in consequence of the total derangement of his affairs. He was a junior partner in the house of Arkwright, Farner, and Co., of whose failure we gave notice in our journal of last week.' And then follow all the sickening details that belong to such matters. Stay—here is something, 'His young and lovely widow accompanied him from Paris, and remains at the Hotel in a very precarious condition, owing to the shock she experienced.' Frightful, is it not?"

"Altogether;—and that woman loose again!"

"What an odd idea! Now I must go to Lady Bohun and coin some falsehood to suit the occasion. Such are the necessities of our social state!"

"Will you not go first to your cousin?"

"No; for she would much rather be alone. Don't you see, this is ostensibly no business of her's, and therefore I can offer her no sympathy. She has a right

to be shocked, but no right to show it—you understand? My dear Lady Bohun, Constance is gone up stairs with a crushing headache : she offers a thousand excuses for leaving you with so little ceremony ; but she means to drive over and see you in a day or two, and challenge you to a farther trial of skill.”

Lady Bohun was distressed, Sir Morgan in despair ; but they ordered their several conveyances to depart.

Lady Bohun's last words referred to a certain mixture of white vinegar and water, an admirable specific for headaches ; and Sir Morgan rode off, with a fervent hope expressed to Mary, that her charming cousin might be able to assure him with her own lips on the morrow that she was perfectly recovered.

CHAPTER II.

By love's religion I must here confesse it,
The most I love, when I the least expresse it.

HERRICK.

My love is strengthened, though more weak in seeming,
I love not less, though less the show appear.
That love is merchandized whose rich esteeming
The owner's tongue doth publish every where.

SHAKSPERE.

Falseness cannot come from thee, for thou look'st
Modest as justice, and thou seem'st a palace
For the crown'd truth to dwell in.

IBID.

It was not in the nature of Constance to affect distress when she felt none, and though utterly shocked by the intelligence which so suddenly met her eye, she could not feel that the loss or the grief was

her's ; and her prevailing sense was a deep thankfulness that she had been prevented from uniting her fate with one, who had proved himself so much the sport of fortune as to terminate his life for a mischance, regarding only his pecuniary affairs.

She was very anxious to know the future lot of Isabel, and she had no means of conjecturing it. Mary could afford her no information, would not even guess. Mrs. D'Oyley was sure that Lady Hernshaw would hasten to Isabel directly she knew of her distress ; it was impossible to feel animosity at such a time. She was now with her mother, there could not be a doubt about it.

“Certainly not,” said Constance, “if every one resembled you, my dear mamma; but I cannot feel at all sure of it in the present instance.”

Mr. D'Oyley asked Constance what she would like to do. She did not know. Should she write to Lady Hernshaw to in-

quire after Mrs. Forde, or would her papa be so kind as to dictate a letter from himself?

Mr. D'Oyley seemed to hesitate a little. They were rather awkwardly placed;—no one would suppose them earnestly anxious about her. Lady Hernshaw might take their inquiries as an insult;—he asked Lord Bevis for his opinion.

Lord Bevis turned round, and met the eager, breathless gaze of Constance.

“You know I must do something,” she said. “I am not going to sit still, thinking that she is placed alone in such dreadful circumstances. I would go down to her myself, if I believed it; I would not wait to see the sky fall, or Lady Hernshaw relent—which would be the same thing.”

“It is not in your nature,” he replied. “I am well aware that you must act. I think you had better write to Lady Hernshaw a mere letter of inquiry about her daughter; you would be justified by your previous acquaintance in doing this, al-

though the way in which it terminated would seem to have put an end to your interest in her well-being."

Constance wrote as it was agreed. She hoped Lady Hernshaw would excuse the trouble to which she put her, in earnestly requesting to know how Mrs. Forde supported the afflicting trial through which she had lately passed.

It is difficult to say whether Constance or Mary was most desirous to know what Lord Bevis thought upon the subject that engrossed them all ; but he made no allusion to it ; he went on walking up and down the room, a common habit of his, and reading sometimes aloud, sometimes to himself, from a volume of the *Faery Queene*.

"Oh, read on ! read out that delicate description of Britomart," cried Mary ; "and confess, every body, that she exceeds every other heroine ever shadowed from the dreaming brain of poet or painter."

"You mean of course, that we under-

stand by a heroine a species of Amazon," said Lord Bevis, "for if you place her in competition with the divine Desdemona, or the peerless Imogen"—

"True," interrupted Mary, "you men don't allow any interference on our part with sword or lance. I was contrasting her in my own mind with Tasso's Clorinda, and thinking how very much more loveable, was the creation of our exquisite Spenser."

"But surely," said Lord Bevis, "you allow the death of Clorinda, both in the wording and circumstances, to be one of the most eloquent and touching passages in poetry. *Non morì già*—you recollect the lines."

"I agree to that," replied Mary; "but the magnificence of Clorinda, and she is a very dazzling vision, is not equalled by the transcendant purity of Britonart. Her dignity, her resolute heart, her delicate beauty; and above all, the most feminine, most ideal, most airy portrait of her gentle

love, make her to my mind the sweetest image of celestial womanhood in the whole range of fiction, though altogether, my dear Constance, a person not admired by the gentlemen : for a very clever writer of the other sex has observed that the ladies most in favour with men, are those who make themselves most eminently disagreeable to women."

" He who would endeavour to draw your character, Miss Hilton," said Lord Bevis, " would find no easy task to perform."

" But that would be a jest," said Mary laughing, " to the toil of the poor artist who should be set to represent my face. I shall never forget Rochard, my dear Constance, when I went with Eustace to sit to him—he did look so deplorably puzzled ! He made a tolerable thing of Eustace, the miniature, you know, which Miss Meredith adored so much ; but I made papa lock up mine, and thus spared

my vanity the sight of so doleful a countenance."

"Oh! make him draw your character!" exclaimed Constance pointing to Lord Bevis.

"It is not fair," returned Mary. "People don't like to be forced to speak unpleasant truths."

"No," said Lord Bevis; "though some people enjoy exceedingly to speak them without compulsion."

"The craniologists," said Mary, "will tell you that you possess, and cultivate every vice under Heaven, with a degree of coolness that the keenest ill-nature cannot always bestow."

"But," said Constance, "I must have you tell me about Britonart's love; you, who are almost an unbeliever in such matters, I should like to know what you call a becoming affection for a lady to encourage."

Lord Bevis looked at Miss Hilton, as

Constance spoke; and she fancied as he passed her, (he was still pacing the room,) that he touched her hand. This was the first idea she entertained of their having any particular regard for each other, and she was delighted beyond measure. In the course of the morning Captain Bohun called. He, like Lord Bevis, made no allusion to the subject that was uppermost in all their thoughts. Constance wondered whether they were really as devoid of curiosity as they seemed to be. However, the conversation became general and interesting, and the very rainy morning passed quickly. There were books to be discussed, and prints to be looked at, and silks to be tangled, as Constance told Lord Bevis, as well as new music to be tried.

“And poor Mary is sitting watching the clouds all this time,” said Constance, “in the vain hope that she will be able to ride this evening. Come away from the window,

Mary ; don't torment yourself with looking at that leaden sky."

"The clouds are floating," said Lord Bevis ; "it will clear up at sunset."

"So I think," said Mary.

"And do you mean to ride, Miss D'Oyley?" asked Captain Bohun.

"If the evening prove fine. I don't mean, like Mary, to gallop through a Scotch mist."

"You don't know the pleasure of it;" said Mary.

"If you wore curls, you would at least acknowledge the inconvenience," returned Constance. "But you are such a desperate horsewoman!"

"*You* are improving, Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis.

"Oh, now! don't patronise me!" exclaimed Constance. "How I do wish I could find anybody who would praise me thoroughly! The idea of anybody wanting to improve!"

“Will not Sir Morgan do?” asked Lord Bevis.

“No; because he does not mean what he says,” she replied. “I long to put all his speeches into plain words. ‘My good young woman,’ he says, ‘you are but a common sort of body without even a grandfather to boast of; but accident has given you a very pretty property; and therefore I am your humble servant to command.’”

“’Till death?” asked Lord Bevis.

“No!” replied Constance, “’till marriage.”

“That is, if possible, a more distant period, is it not?” said Lord Bevis.

“Much more,” said Constance laughing. “But then, my gentleman goes to his friends and says, ‘No, upon my honour, now; how can you do my taste so much wrong? I only amused myself with the poor girl, never had a serious thought, upon my honour!’”

“He will be here presently,” said Lord Bevis.

“Never believe it,” returned Constance. “He will not trust his precious person through the rain, because he is quite sure, that at any moment I shall be ready to fall down at the feet of that cross-barred coat of arms he is so proud of.”

“Fancy quartering your bezants and banners upon that lattice work of his !” said Mary laughing.

“No, after all, we should not jest about it,” said Constance ; “because when a man asks for your property, he does you a great favour ; and as to Sir Morgan, he has not done that yet, and most likely never will.”

Captain Bohun did not seem at all embarrassed by the terms upon which he found Constance and Lord Bevis. Whether he understood them rightly, or whether it was no longer an object of interest to him, how Constance felt to-

wards others, she could not tell. He certainly remained as long as he possibly could for a morning visit, and certainly she thought, contributed very much to its pleasure. As he rose to take leave, he said that the rain prevented Lady Bohun from calling to inquire after Constance, and she deputed him to express her good wishes and anxiety for her recovery.

"Thank you," said Constance looking up at him in some wonder; "pray tell Lady Bohun I am quite well."

"My cousin's headache has left her entirely," said Mary.

"I saw some bad news suddenly," returned Constance in a steady voice. "Lady Bohun may know that I did. But the bad news might have been a great deal worse." She said the last few words as if to herself.

"Oh! Constance," said Mary, "(the old story!) you will never be a woman of the world!"

Captain Bohun said nothing that could

be interpreted by Constance into any expression of feeling or regard ; but the look he gave her as he took his leave, made it difficult to believe that he had ceased to care for her.

CHAPTER III.

Fair is my love, but not so fair as fickle.

Mild as a dove, but neither true nor trusty.

SHAKSPEARE.

A mother said you ? I forgot your claim

To her obedience, as you left undone

Your task of love, of warning, of control,

Your high and difficult mission, all undone.

ANON.

“AND what does Eustace say ?” asked Constance as she leaned against the window, and knew by the singular scribble of the letter Miss Hilton held in her hand that it was from her brother.

“Says—oh ! that he cannot come,” replied Mary.

“Does he condescend to give a rea-

son for the impossibility?" asked Constance.

"Not any. Is it not singular, my dear Constance," said Mary after a pause, "that a girl without a single merit, by the force of simple flattery, broad flattery, such as a woman would shrink from with disgust, should be able thus to achieve her ends?"

"It is strange," said Constance; "and Captain Bohun thinks him very shrewd."

"So he is, remarkably," replied Mary; "but show me the man, Constance, who is shrewd where his own vanity is concerned! All the blindness of love, which is a fable; and of selfishness, which is a disease; and of folly, which is a fault; and all the physical blindnesses which are attacked by the faculty, fall short of the enormous blindness engendered by a man's vanity."

"I am very sorry for you, dear," began Constance.

"No, don't be," returned Mary; "I

always thought he would marry some inferior person. Like most men of his capacity and habits, he would be horror-struck at the idea of a woman possessing any useful or noble qualities. She must be as nearly as possible a Mahomedan in point of education, except, that instead of the modest seclusion imposed upon the women of that persuasion, she should be exposed to the impertinent and calculating scrutiny of as many men as can conveniently be brought together on every occasion."

Constance laughed at this description; and Mary went on.

"Although, Constance," said Mary, "if you had been less honest and less odd, I believe you might have bestowed on him a worthy wife without his consent. He would have taken you, not *for* your virtues indeed, but in despite of them, as is the case I do think whenever a good woman marries. Yes, it is very pretty in you

to disclaim it ; I only know that Eustace said to me in a very doleful manner the day before he left Hillsted, 'I don't believe that Constance would have me, if I were to ask her even.' "

Constance could not help laughing at the remarkable penetration her cousin had evinced in coming to this conclusion ; but she disclaimed, more vehemently than before, all chance on her part of coming in for a share of his thousands upon thousands.

As the matter is not of much importance, it may be as well to mention here, that the admiration of Mr. Eustace Hilton for Miss Meredith went on in the usual way. She was a nice girl, and a fine creature, and a lovely woman, and an angel in due progression ! She worked him a cigar case, and he gave her a bracelet, and then wrote an incoherent letter to his father to beg his consent to their marriage. The consent his father flatly refused ; and as that involved the probable refusal of certain

needful sums of money, it was rather more conclusive than it might otherwise have been. There was a little talk about constancy between the young people, and then, there came to the house where Miss Meredith was staying, a very silly lord, who was richer than Eustace was ever likely to be. Miss Meredith transferred her flattery and affections to the new comer, and explained to Eustace that she should ever be wretched without his father's consent to their engagement, and that she felt it an imperative duty to break it off. This assurance was supported by the sight of another cigar-case which she was embroidering for the young lord. For three whole days Eustace was very uncomfortable. He ate and drank much more than usual at dinner, rode a fine horse almost to pieces, and filled up his leisure moments by abusing his servants. These salutary methods dissipated his vexation in due time; and he was quite ready to fall in love with the next amiable young lady

who might cross his path. Miss Meredith did not succeed with the rich lord ; but perseverance is generally rewarded sooner or later ; and there is little doubt that between the years of twenty and forty her efforts were crowned with some sort of a husband.

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And many days passed on, without bringing any answer to the appeal which Constance had addressed to Lady Hershaw. They did not, however, pass so slowly or so anxiously as might have been expected. Captain Bohun was constantly in her society, and she did not conceal from herself that he contributed to her happiness. He never spoke of the subject that occupied her ; but he rode every day to the post town to bring her letters, a little earlier than she would have received them by the hands of the village postman. But for this attention, she might have thought he had forgotten the name or the position

of Isabel. But he never led her to suppose, by a single unguarded word, that he was renewing his endeavours to obtain her regard. She sometimes thought that he was anxious to be upon friendly terms with her; and that such was the extent of his ambition. Still he met her constantly in her rides or walks, and promoted every scheme of amusement that was likely to bring the two families together.

One morning, instead of returning empty handed, for Constance, as I have said, was not burdened with a large correspondence, Captain Bohun brought her a packet of unusual size. There was a certain hesitation in his manner of giving it, (for he well knew the hand-writing,) that made Constance forbode some bad news in its contents. She tore it open, and half a dozen letters fell from the envelope, in which was written in the stiff hard hand of Lady Hernshaw the following words: "Lady Hernshaw regrets

that Miss D'Oyley should have waited so long for tidings of Mrs. Forde ; but the delay was owing to Lady Hernshaw's absence from home. She encloses all the letters she has received from Mrs. Forde, as the best information in her power to afford to Miss D'Oyley's obliging inquiries."

" And this was the mother of Isabel !"

Constance shocked and startled, burst into a passion of tears ; and as soon as she could command her voice, gave Lady Hernshaw's letter to Captain Bohun to read.

" Could you believe it ?" she said.

" Very easily of Lady Hernshaw," he replied. " But I am very deeply grieved to see you so much distressed."

" Oh ! never mind me ; think of Isabel !" said Constance in her usual straightforward manner ; and half blinded by her tears she perused one letter after another : one earnest entreaty for a mother's presence,

a mother's support in her bitter trial, followed by another still more earnest, more hopeless, more agonised. Isabel was not formed to struggle alone with adversity.

To say that Constance was distressed, is a term that would hardly paint the tempest of her feelings. All the deep pity in her nature was aroused, all the indignation that the unnatural conduct of the mother could be supposed to summon, was poured forth without reserve. In a passion of bitter tears she caught up the whole handful of letters, and ran with them into her father's study.

Captain Bohun loitered about the room, not liking to go, and not knowing exactly how to stay.

Presently Miss Hilton came in. She knew the contents of the letters, and spoke without hesitation of Lady Hernshaw's cruel conduct.

Captain Bohun gave his opinion of her Ladyship in very strong terms, but said that, for his part, he thought the daughter

very worthy of the mother. As for him, not a day passed that he did not thank Heaven for the escape he had had !

“ And yet,” said Mary, “ from the tone of resentment in which you always speak of her, it is evident to me that you never loved her, or, that you love her still.”

Whatever truth this remark might contain, it was clear that Captain Bohun was annoyed by it. He made no reply, and took up a book as if to conceal some embarrassment.

“ At any rate,” said Mary, after a pause, “ one Constance is worth a thousand Isabels.”

She spoke unconsciously, and was sorry the moment afterwards that she had said any thing so marked.

“ A thousand !” exclaimed Captain Bohun throwing his book on the table, “ she is the most beautiful and truthful piece of nature ever created !”

At this moment her quick footstep was

heard across the hall, and Constance entered in great haste.

"It is all settled, Mary," she cried, "I am going down to Isabel directly: papa says I may. Captain Bohun, don't go away, you cannot be quite without interest in the matter. You will be glad to know, that Isabel is not wholly deserted."

"I cannot want interest in any thing that concerns you," returned Captain Bohun.

"And, Lord Bevis," said Constance turning as he entered; "upon my word I take it very unkind of you never to say a word for me when I had set my heart upon going, and a syllable from you would have settled it; papa thinks so much of your opinion. But it does not matter, I go at last."

"As I could not offer to escort you," said Lord Bevis, "I thought it better to be quiet."

"I am sure I hope you will not run away and leave papa, just because I am bringing

home Isabel ; for I will bring her," said Constance.

" I should find it very difficult to leave this place," returned Lord Bevis, without raising his head from the book that lay before him.

" And you mean to bring this lady to your house !" said Captain Bohun. " I may, without offending you, say that she has once disturbed its peace ; is it just to yourself to incur a second risk ?"

" I do not bring her to live with me always," returned Constance : " that might please none of us ; but she shall have the shelter of my roof until she finds one of her own. She was my friend, and I part very slowly from such ties. I do not know how she can injure me now ; but there are better things than happiness, even in this world."

" And who goes with you ?" asked Lord Bevis.

" You may well ask. Mamma could not, and I would not let papa, now that quiet is

every thing to him ; and Edgar would be of no use, and you would not be proper, so I have sent down to dear Mrs. Agatha—and there she is coming up the avenue. Is she not one of those common examples of the despised sisterhood, that prove the fallacy of the general prejudice more than a volume of essays could do ? Is she not as simple, and as dignified as if she were a married woman, and more benevolent, (I should say beneficent) than she could be in that situation ?”

“ She is a very nice person, and rather a lady patroness of mine,” said Lord Bevis.

“ I know it is an effort for a man to praise an old maid heartily,” returned Constance, “ and I am glad to see you can manage it. You see, the estate implies rather a contempt of their attractions, which is galling ; and the easiest and cheapest means of retaliation is ridicule. Did you ever observe, Mary, that in books single women are always described as useful

rather than ornamental? Whereas if you listen to the married ladies retailing all the witty rubbish of their darlings, or fighting their way over again through all their ailments, it is impossible to deny that a well informed single woman is far more fitted to play her part in society than those favoured beings called wives."

"My evidence would go for nothing," said Mary smiling; "your's, my dear Constance, may do them some good."

"We have been praising you, Mrs. Agatha, to the very echo," said Lord Bevis.

"Many thanks;" said Mrs. Agatha. "Now my dear, are you ready?"

"The very quickest and the very kindest creature in the world!" exclaimed Constance. "I will only make my adieus to papa and mamma, and lose no more time."

Their journey passed without anything worthy of comment. Mrs. Agatha was an intelligent and conversable person, and

Constance was soon drawn from the motives of her journey to discuss persons and things with ease and liveliness.

Mrs. Agatha hinted at the attentions of Sir Morgan Wyndham, which had by that time become the talk of the neighbourhood. Constance expressed her contempt and aversion of this person in a way that would not have been remarkably gratifying had he been within hearing.

"I cannot attain Mary's indifference to the every-day business of society," said she. "I believe it is contrary to my nature; but I think it forms an admirable shield against the encouragement of feelings a little too angry to be quite consistent with christian charity. But perhaps I am not old enough! Don't you think, Mrs. Agatha, that young people admire virtue more than the old?"

"They expect it more, my dear," said Mrs. Agatha; "they are, I allow, warmer in their detestation of what is mean than their elders. No one can stand still. It is the

same with regard to character, as with the physical powers : years which bring so many burdens to the body, bring strength or weakness to the soul accordingly as they have been used. And though I believe the love of virtue grows, yet patience grows with it, and the faults and weaknesses of our nature are more gently regarded than in the impatient and disdainful spirit of youth."

"Don't you think," said Constance after a pause, "that Mary and Lord Bevis are becoming very great friends?"

"I am very glad to think so, my dear," said Mrs. Agatha, "for it would be hardly possible to select a wife with so much reasonable chance of happiness. He has seen nothing of the world, and does not wish to extend his knowledge of it. Miss Hilton has seen too much; and is more willing to relinquish society than he could expect any woman of her age and advantages to be. For you, my dear, when first I became acquainted with you both, I

rather wished the match. But you have and ought to have, the world before you ; you should not become the wife of a recluse. You must find some man upon whose character you can rely, and whose tranquillity of temper would be a relief to your more animated spirits."

Constance laughed, but turned her head from her companion. She could not fail to realise her description.

There is something pleasant and exciting to your - novice in travelling, in coming to an inn at the end of a journey. Something in the strange room and hasty meal, and the glimpse into the street, or the half cultivated garden, possesses a charm to those who have not shared very largely in the stimulus of novelty.

Constance enjoyed it all. She thought the tea service pretty, and the balcony filled with fresh though common flowers, delightful. She could sit upon the sill of the French window, so completely screened by

the tall myrtles and geraniums, that there was nothing shocking in her position. It enabled her to look into the broad street and watch the lamps slowly kindled, and the glitter of the lighted shops, and the quick moving carriages and foot-passengers. As she was passing the time in this manner, she was not a little startled to see Captain Bohun quietly walking up the the street in the direction of her hotel. She certainly thought at first that her eyes had deceived her, but as he passed lamp after lamp, revealing distinctly his very features, she became certain that whatever cause had brought him to Southampton, there he was. She turned very pale ; but there was no light in the room to betray her change of complexion, and Mrs. Agatha went on gently discoursing as if her listener's soul was absorbed in the history of the Dutch clock which Constance had presented to the village school, and which lost ten minutes a day, until the nephew of the

schoolmistress, a precocious youth of about twelve, had taken it to pieces, cleaned it, and set it going again. This last piece of information, which to an ordinary observer would have been as agreeable as unexpected, elicited from Constance a deep sigh, but no word of remark or answer. Mrs. Agatha took it for granted that her thoughts were with her friend, and she changed the topic to their arrangements for the morrow. Mrs. Agatha was to visit Isabel first and prepare her for meeting Constance, for Constance thought, with her usual quickness of feeling, that Isabel was in no state of health to be benefited by a surprise.

But this subject was soon discussed, and her thoughts reverted to Captain Bohun's appearance. All the doubts she entertained of his conduct to herself were cleared up in a moment. It was plain that he could not get rid of his attachment to Isabel. He was here, because though he did not intend

to see her, (Constance was sure of that,) yet the moment she was free, he hastened to breathe the air that surrounded her, and to watch, though at a distance, over her welfare. His hesitation in naming her, his resentment when the subject was entered upon, were so many signs of an attachment which his reason reproved, but which his heart could not forget. She could ascribe no blame to him at any rate ! His conduct to her had been marked by no injustice, no duplicity ; his offer had been distinctly rejected, and he was free to select the terms on which they were to meet for the future. She had begun, just a little, to mistake them ; but she understood him in time : she could now meet and part as strangers should, yet she could not avoid musing on his repeated warning. Isabel, she felt, was again to disturb her peace ; yet not for that would she refrain from extending to her her warmest protection at a time that she was deserted by the world. And so dream-

ing of the past and the future, she sat till it was time to retire for the night, while Mrs. Agatha who guessed that her thoughts were painfully wandering, took good care not to disturb her meditations.

CHAPTER IV.

Ay Jovino !

Ay amigo ! ay de mi ! Tu solo a un triste,
 Leal, confidente en su miseria extrema,
 Eres salud y suspirado puerto,
 En tu fiel seno de bondad dechado
 Mis infelices lágrimas se vierten
 Y mis querellas sin temor, piadoso
 Las oye y mezcla con mi llanto el tuyo.

D. JUAN MELENDEZ VALDES.

It was with the utmost impatience that Constance waited Mrs. Agatha's return from the hotel where Mrs. Forde was staying. She came back looking tired and distressed ; but she did not for that reason withhold her tidings, like Juliet's nurse of famous memory. Mrs. Forde was, she said, extremely weak—very much

agitated, but most thankful to hear that Constance had come to her assistance. She could hardly believe it at first, and was penetrated with gratitude when she became convinced that it was the case. She had been very ill, indeed for some days her life had been despaired of; but she was now sufficiently recovered to return at once with Constance. She appeared to be quite ignorant of the state of her pecuniary affairs; and the sooner they were intrusted to a man of business the better, Mrs. Agatha thought, that she might know what she had to depend upon—suspense being the worst of all evils.

“And you know, Mrs. Agatha,” said Constance; “I brought money with me, so that she might have no difficulty on that score in leaving the place directly.”

“Yes my dear,” said Mrs. Agatha, “she will be better for leaving the place. It has become terrible to her, and the daily uncertainty she has suffered has

made it worse. I never saw a person less fitted to combat the ills of life. She had formed no plan, anticipated no future ; but sat down in a chaos of misery, to be relieved, or to die—as it might happen.”

“ The result of a false education !” said Constance ; “ but, dear Mrs. Agatha, did you tell her all about Leyton ?”

No, in the hurry and excitement of her interview, Mrs. Agatha had entered into no relation of the changes that had taken place in her friend’s fortunes.

It had been agreed between them that her visit should follow fast upon the preparatory one paid to Isabel by Mrs. Agatha, so the above account was hardly concluded before she was dressed, and on her way.

She traversed the few streets she had to pass with such a rapid step, that Mrs. Agatha could scarcely keep pace with her ; but when she found herself at the door of the hotel, she paused for breath as much from her overwrought feelings as from the haste she had made. She heard Mrs.

Agatha ask for Mrs. Forde, she followed mechanically the waiter who showed them through the straggling passages ; and when at length he stopped and threw open a door, she took courage, entered suddenly, and found herself in the presence of her friend.

The room was shabby and melancholy, with a garish red paper that looked hot and angry in the noon of a summer's sun, a forlorn abode for the solitary and beautiful creature who lay, in the utmost state of exhaustion and weakness, upon a clumsy black horse-hair sofa opposite the door.

To have seen her in one of the wretched hovels painted by Crabbe, would have been less repugnant to her graceful nature, than when surrounded by the vulgar and dreary discomfort of a second-rate inn.

Constance was prepared, by all Mrs. Agatha had told her, to find a great alteration in Isabel ; but she was not prepared for the devastation which her violent and

sudden grief had wrought upon her countenance.

She was not so very much wasted ; and but for the colourless cheek, was not whiter than the marble paleness of complexion habitual to her. It was in the languid half-lifeless expression of her eye and form that the change lay.

Isabel did not rise from the sofa, but held out her hand and said in a faint voice : “ Constance, I should be ashamed to meet you, but for all this misery—”

Her voice was scarcely audible, but she did not shed a tear. Constance was in a moment by her side, clasping her to her breast and weeping passionately. They were reconciled—they were friends again. There was no need of words to express and explain the feelings of their hearts. Constance had long forgiven the past, and as she looked upon the fragile creature who lay half senseless in her arms, she renewed her silent resolve that she would shelter and protect her as warmly as if no

cloud had ever interposed between their loves.

She was not one to give way to her feelings, when there was anything to be done. Giving Isabel into the charge of Mrs. Agatha, she roused herself to settle and prepare every thing for their journey. She discharged her accounts, she overlooked the hasty preparations that were necessary for her removal, and in an hour's time Isabel was supported to the carriage, and they were on their road to her home.

They travelled till evening, and then stopped at an inn for the night. Isabel asked the name of the town, and seemed surprised when she heard it.

"We don't live at the old rectory now," said Constance; "we live in Herefordshire."

Isabel was satisfied with this reply, and lay quietly on the sofa without speaking or asking any questions during the evening. She was in a state of such

complete exhaustion that she seemed to have no curiosity about anything. Mrs. Agatha made the tea and distributed the refreshments to her young charges in perfect silence. She was an admirable companion, for she possessed a ready sympathy for the moods of others, which is one of the rarest virtues to be met with on this side of Heaven.

She insisted on their going to bed very early, and would not allow Constance to stay and talk with her, as she had a great inclination to do.

They began their journey rather late the next morning, on Mrs. Forde's account ; and performed it in the same quiet manner. Isabel, leaning her head on her friend's shoulder, sat tranquil to all appearance, but quite silent ; content to stop for rest or refreshment where Constance desired it, but asking nothing, and rarely lifting her eyes to observe any passing object.

She never seemed to notice the handsome carriage they were travelling in, although she might have recollected that the D'Oyleys never had possessed such an appendage in their lives.

They were to reach Leyton late in the evening, and for a summer's night it was unusually dark. Isabel noticed nothing as the lodge-gates were thrown open, and they wound up the majestic avenue.

Constance felt her heart beat faster and faster as they neared the house; she could scarcely define her feelings. I believe they were not altogether free from the image of Captain Bohun. Edgar's voice was the first sound that welcomed her home.

"Here they are! I knew it. Didn't I say so, papa?" he cried running down the steps, as the carriage drew close up to the door, "There's Constance!—take care, dear, of the step—here's my arm!"

"It is so dark, Edgar dear," said Constance, "that I cannot see you at all."

There were tears in her voice, to use a French expression, but she spoke cheerfully.

Lord Bevis came down the steps in silence and offered her his arm.

“And you, are you well?” said she, “but pray take care of dear Isabel, she is wearied to death.”

She conducted Isabel, with the assistance of Lord Bevis, into the hall; and hastily receiving the welcome of her father and mother, insisted on taking her friend up at once to the room prepared for her.

“She is so very tired, mamma,” she urged, taking Isabel from Mrs. D'Oyley's gentle embrace. “Please to give me that candle, Lord Bevis.”

Isabel, who was leaning heavily on Constance, started at the name, and raised her eyes to his.

He was standing much as when she saw him first, with a large cloak thrown across his shoulder in the Spanish manner, as pale as agitated, and gazing on her as earnestly,

but with the deepest compassion in his aspect. And she, in her widow's weeds, wasted by sorrow and anxiety, the thought crossed her mind, how different she was from the radiant creature who then leaned from the carriage and won him to her purpose with a smile !

She cast a hurried glance round upon the magnificent hall with its highly decorated and carved roof, its marble floor and noble oak staircase, at the servants who were passing to and from the carriage ; she noticed for the first time the studied and expensive toilet that Constance wore, and looking with breathless eagerness from Lord Bevis to her, she suddenly exclaimed :

“ Constance ! you are his wife.”

Constance blushed very deeply, but she could hardly contain her mirth, for after all the guess was a very probable way of solving the mystery.

“ No, dearest Isabel,” she said, “ I am nobody's wife, I do assure you ; but you shall puzzle yourself no more about us all to-night.

We will have a long and quiet talk as soon as it is good for you. Here, Lord Bevis, you may take this cumbrous cardinal of mine, which is only in the way of my helping Isabel, and take care to give Mrs. Agatha some tea before I come down stairs ; if anybody waits for me, I will never forgive them."

As she spoke, she led Isabel gently up stairs, and insisted on helping her to undress. She brought her, with her own hands, such refreshments as she could prevail on her to take, and sat beside her with the intention of watching her until she fell asleep.

"You will not let me ask you any questions," said Isabel, "until to-morrow ; but I cannot think how it all is. Lord Bevis here, and your blush, Constance, ah ! he will be very happy !"

"I hope he will, dear Isabel," said Constance ; "but I have no intention of making him so. This house is mine, and most glad I am to welcome you to it, as heartily,

dearest, as if we had always continued to be to each other what I trust we shall ever be again. But I will not talk, so let me bid you good night ; go to Fairy-land or Dream-land till to-morrow, when you shall know as much as ever you care to ask about us all !”

“ Oh ! papa,” said Constance as she took her accustomed seat close beside her father’s chair, “ papa, you cannot think how hungry I am !”

CHAPTER V.

Love, controller of all hearts and eyes,
Awakener of new wills, and slumbering sympathies.

CRABBE.

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,
For they in thee a thousand errors note ;
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise.

SHAKSPEARE.

How can it? Oh! how can love's eye be true,
That is so vexed with watching and with tears!

IBID.

WHEN Constance retired for the night, her cousin Mary followed her into her room. The cousins embraced each other, and then Mary addressed to her some common place inquiries respecting her journey and some more particular ones concerning Mrs. Forde.

“ You have done a very generous thing without knowing it, dear Constance,” said Mary, taking her seat in one of the arm chairs by the fire-place ; “ you remind me of good M. Jourdan’s profound unconsciousness of his prosaic powers. The result of your experiments I regret that I cannot stay to witness, for here is a summons from papa to proceed immediately to London : you know his resolves are always sudden, and he thinks I have been absent from him long enough.” She held out an open letter as she spoke.

“ And I have not a word to say, much as I wish you here,” said Constance glancing over the letter, “ because uncle Hilton has really spared you very quietly all this time ; but I should be very glad of another fortnight ; and you will miss Lady Bohun’s archery meeting.”

“ Oh ! I can bear that,” said Mary smiling.

“ Yes, I forget that these festivals are not so fresh to you as to me,” replied Constance, “ oh ! if you could have staid

till it is all over with papa—but that I never hoped, so it is not a disappointment exactly.”

“ You will be sure to write to me on the very day,” said Mary, “ though I have no fears ; it is certain to succeed, everything is in uncle D'Oyley's favour : the tranquillity of his mind, the repose of his life, and a certain active little daughter who takes from him all care and responsibility. Ah ! Constance, your fortune came at the right time.”

“ And he does so enjoy Lord Bevis being here ?” said Constance. Mary rose from her chair, and began examining the ornaments on the chimney piece. She took up one Dresden shepherdess after another, and seemed to be inspecting their costume with the most minute attention.

“ I wonder,” said she, and then she began examining another shepherdess.

“ Yes, dear,” said Constance ; and she rose in her turn, and began to turn over

the china toys, as if she had never seen them before.

“ I wonder very much,” said Mary, “ if my uncle and aunt ever thought, that you and Lord Bevis, being engaged much in one common cause, attending on your father, would become attached to each other.”

“ What they thought, I cannot say,” returned Constance, “ because people’s thoughts are so very odd at times ; but nothing was ever more improbable. Why, we became good sociable friends the very first day he came down.”

“ Because—” and here Mary had recourse to the chain of her eye-glass, which she drew through her fingers for some time in profound silence.

Talk of the bashfulness with which a young girl reveals her love, what is it to the confusion of a woman, who thinks herself too old to have any business with such feelings ?

Constance felt a little mischievous—she would not say any thing to help her.

“In fact, dear,” said Mary suddenly, “when this letter came, Lord Bevis took occasion to make me an offer, and I—accepted him.”

“Of course, dear,” said Constance, throwing her arms round her cousin; “do you think I did not expect it?”

“He wished to follow me at once to London,” said Mary, “and then return to your father; but I made him understand that he had no business to think at all about me till uncle D'Oyley was quite recovered; and so that is settled. But I have many fears, many misgivings.”

“You! is it possible?” exclaimed Constance. “I do not think a woman can wish for a more sincere, a more amiable disposition than his; and how he ever came to appreciate one so suitable to his own, will be my wonder to the end of time, seeing that people generally select the very indi-

vidual most fitted to make them eminently miserable."

"Yes, every thing must go *à tort et à travers*, where marriage is merely considered as a matter of convenience," said Mary.

"Why then, you don't anticipate any objection on the part of uncle Hilton?" inquired Constance.

"Not the least," replied Mary; "he will be exalted beyond measure. I think," she added with a faint smile, "he will really begin to love me. It has always been a source of annoyance to him that I did not marry; and this has been varied by a good deal of worry, lest I should consult my inclinations rather than my purse, and fall in love with some pauper. Papa, who is so scrupulously honest in his dealings with the world, thinks nothing of a little shuffling in Cupid's courts; and regards a marriage of convenience, as a superior kind of diplomacy."

“Then your uncertainties come back to Lord Bevis after all!” said Constance.

“I am half ashamed of them,” replied her cousin; “but you know how he loved that fatal creature; and now she comes among us again—this Isabel—and you and I—” and here Mary leaned her head on the mantel-piece, and fairly burst into tears.

“Courage then, Mary, and let him go!” exclaimed Constance, drawing herself up to her full height. “But recollect, that her spells once broken will never unite again, at least in the hearts of those who are really worth the having; and she poor girl—she is past all art, in power, and I hope in will, now. Those who seek her will do so in compassion and renewed love for her beauty and helpless condition; but Lord Bevis will not be the man, and I know him better than you do, take my word for it. So, that we may not stay talking till dawn, let me, if you please, turn you out of the room.”

Mary could not help smiling.

“ You are undoubtedly a heroine, Constance,” she said, as she took up her candle, “ and I am so much ashamed of my folly, that I dare not look you in the face ; but please to recollect that with all my suitors, I have never had a lover before.”

Constance was first in the breakfast room the next morning. Then came Edgar, then followed Lord Bevis in his usual *laissez aller* manner.

“ Quite recovered from your fatigue, I see !” was his remark, as he shook hands with her.

“ Now, begging your pardon, I am particularly tired this morning,” replied Constance, “ and was expecting a little condolence from you.”

“ I am very sorry,” said Lord Bevis, “ but really you ought not to look so well, if you wish to excite compassion.”

“ Do I ?” said Constance, coolly surveying herself in the glass. “ True, I have rather a provoking colour, arising I sup-

pose, from want of sleep. Is there any news this morning? No, don't, pray, hand the paper to me, because I cannot read a newspaper; I only wished to be convinced that in all those four sheets, there is really not a particle of news. Stay, is not that papa's step?"

She looked so very lovely when she listened, it seemed to give new life to her whole person, and her's was a countenance which emotion always ennobled.

"Mr. A—— is so sanguine, I have no fears," said she, quite unconscious at the moment that she was not alone. "His sight is worse daily, yesterday he could not distinguish his watch, he will soon be totally blind." She stopped, for she saw a mournful smile on the face of her companion. A pang of terror so acute as to deprive her for the moment of speech and breath, shot through her heart.

"I assure you," said he, interpreting her look of distress, "I am as sanguine as Dr. A—— can be. I did but think, when you

brought proofs of his blindness as cause for satisfaction, in what near proportion our joys and griefs are mingled in the chalice of life."

"Oh! thank you," said Constance. "I am easily frightened in that way. And here he comes!" she exclaimed, as she ran to greet him, "with a beautiful flower in his hand. Where did you get this, papa?"

"Not very honestly, my dear," said Mr. D'Oyley, "I took it out of your mamma's flower-stand, thinking it was a carnation; but I fancy it is one of your modern innovations, for it has no scent."

Carnations, how the word brought back her days of courtship! They had been her favourite flower, and Mr. Forde had made a point of bringing them to her, thanks to the skill of his gardener, long after they had ceased to blossom in the open air.

She turned to Jane, who stood with the tray for her mamma's breakfast, and busied herself in preparing it.

"Can I help you?" asked Lord Bevis,

"I always feel a sense of dismay, when I see a lady busy, which is all the advance I have made as yet to good breeding."

"Do you wish to be contradicted?" asked Constance. "I certainly cannot let you help me, because I am fond of the affair of breakfast-making; a sort of important, fussy dignity is attached to the dispensing of tea and coffee."

"How is—Mrs. Forde," said Lord Bevis pronouncing the last two words very quickly.

Before she could reply, her cousin Mary entered. Constance thought she looked very much as if she had passed a sleepless night, her raven hair contrasting more strongly than usual with the pure paleness of her cheeks.

Lord Bevis manœuvred her into the chair next himself, and exchanged a few remarks with her in rather a low tone. But if any body wishes to be sentimental, they should not have a great boy at table with them!

"I say, Constance," cried Edgar, across the table, "next time you buy a horse, just wait till I'm in the way, will you? I don't half like that chesnut you talk of riding."

"Don't you, dear!" returned Constance, "perhaps you will have the kindness to send the toast down this way."

"Who knows when Captain Bohun will come here again?" continued Edgar, looking round. "I have seen nothing of him these two days."

Constance felt the colour mounting into her cheeks, but she made no answer.

"I don't know indeed, my dear," said Mr. D'Oyley; "he talked of bringing me a volume of Dugdale, so perhaps he may be over here this morning; but I think some one said, he had gone out for a day or two."

"You see, Edgar," said Mary, looking up suddenly, "that Captain Bohun does not come here to visit *me*."

Edgar looked from one to another, and then began to laugh to himself.

"Because," said he, "when he had a

little recovered from his paroxysm, "Tim and I have found such a splendid stream for trouting. You know the chalk cliff, which drops so suddenly from the high road, and the hollow filled with mountain ash and yew trees ; well, deep in the ground, there runs such a clear stream, bubbling over broken bits of rock, and farther on it gets a little wider, and the hawthorns grow right across it. You can't throw a fly very well there, but just drop your line along one of those rocky stones ; there is always a trout hiding. Tim and I caught three beauties the first day you were gone. If Captain Bohun had stept in that day, I would have taken him with us."

Having delivered this long narration, Edgar wound up by calling Captain Bohun a nice sort of a fellow, and helping himself bountifully to dried salmon.

And now breakfast was over, and the carriage at the door. Every body was sorry that Mary was going ; her even spirits were invaluable in a family circle ;

and, with an apparent indolence of manner, it was quite wonderful how much she did in the course of a day. She would read with her uncle, and angle with Edgar, and chat with Constance, and drive with her aunt, and call on Mrs. Agatha to teach her some new mystery in knitting, and play chess with Lord Bevis, and write half a dozen letters in the odd intervals of waiting to ride, or going upstairs to take off her bonnet, or any spare minute that nobody thought of turning to account, and all with such a total want of effort in her manner, that people forgot by night that she had been actively employed all the day.

“Come, Edgar, my boy, have a little mercy on your cousin,” said Mr. D'Oyley, as Mary stood entering upon her tablets the different commissions with which Master Edgar had charged her. “Half these things would be just as well procured at H——.”

“No, no my dear uncle,” said Mary,

“there is a magic in any thing that comes from London to those who live in the country. His flies will catch more fish, and his arrows will go straighter to the mark; and his new bridle will possess some charm hitherto unknown—will keep his pony from shying, perhaps! No more commands? Then good by to all. How soon, Constance, shall we all meet again?”

But Constance was in tears and did not answer; and she was still standing alone in the deserted room, when Lord Bevis having seen Mary to the carriage, and the carriage out of sight, came back and roused her from her fit of musing.

“Miss D'Oyley,” said he, holding out his hand, “wish me joy, won't you?”

CHAPTER VI.

Ceder l'amato oggetto
Nè spargere un sospiro,
Sarà virtù, l' ammiro ;
Ma non la curo in me.

ATTILIO REGOLO.

Here will I seat myself, beside this old
Hollow and weedy oak, which ivy-twine
Clothes as with net-work :

Unheard, unseen,
And listening only to the pebbly brook
That murmurs with a dead, yet tinkling sound ;
Or to the bees, that in the neighbouring trunk
Make honey-hoards.

COLERIDGE.

It was some days before Constance could prevail on Isabel to venture down stairs. The physician gave it as his decided opinion that she should endeavour to exert herself ; that she should mix with the

family, take air and exercise, and try by employment to get rid of her dejection. But she shrank from appearing to any one, with a natural reluctance that Constance strove in vain to combat. The day after her return, Captain Bohun called at the door to inquire after Miss D'Oyley, and left the book which he had promised to her father. Since that time she had heard nothing of him. She endeavoured as much as possible to banish him from her thoughts; but she never looked on Isabel without bringing him to her recollection. At this moment, however, she was occupied in enticing her to come down for a few moments — only into her little morning room.

This was a favourite sitting-room of her's, in which, with its Tudor window filled with stained glass, and looking into the quaint flower garden, she usually spent the early part of the morning. It was the only room she had refurnished, and it had been a great delight to her to fit it up with all the

old carved oak chairs and cabinets that she could procure far and near.

Having led her in triumph into this sanctum, she was not a little annoyed to find Lord Bevis waiting her arrival;—not that it was forbidden ground to him, but that she did not at that time particularly wish for his company.

She advanced hurriedly with Isabel, with a gesture as if she were going to introduce her. But Lord Bevis interrupted her. Taking Isabel's hand from her's, he said, very gently, and without the slightest appearance of agitation:

“No, this is not our first meeting—I saw Mrs. Forde the other night, remember. I am very glad,” he added, addressing himself to Isabel, “that you have gained a little strength in the last few days;—indeed, you have so careful and kind a nurse that you must make haste to get well in common justice to her exertions.”

“In common gratitude—” Isabel began, but she could not complete her sentence;

tears trembled in her eyes, and she leaned her head back against the chair in which he had placed her, with an air of languor and extreme dejection.

Lord Bevis then hastened to explain his intrusion, as he called it ; which was merely to offer Constance a casket of black oak very curiously carved, which had belonged to Queen Mary ;—in proof whereof he pointed to the pomegranates carved on the lid and sides of the lock, which that Princess had assumed among her armorial bearings on her marriage with Philip of Spain. Constance was highly delighted with this addition to her antiquities, and having expressed her thanks, and then banished him from the room, she returned to Isabel.

She drew her chair close to the open window ; and they both sat silent for some time, looking at the dark masses of trees that skirted the garden, and the bright beds of summer flowers, enjoying the soft breeze that now and then wafted in the

scent of the jessamine that hung in thick clusters over the casement.

"And you will not try to come down this evening, Isabel?" said Constance; "we are quite alone."

"You never are *quite* alone, dear," replied Isabel, in those faint tones which had now become habitual to her.

"I am sure, unless it were Captain Bohun who might happen to come in—" said Constance, hesitating.

Isabel's face became dyed with blushes in a moment.

"I had rather meet any one else," she faltered.

"I do believe, dear Isabel," said Constance, earnestly, "I do believe that man is the cause of all your misfortunes."

"Not altogether," said Isabel; "but had I been quite fancy free, I should not perhaps have contemplated with such horror my marriage with Lord Bevis. Surely he is very much altered now, or I am changed greatly. I thought he would be

jealous, and you know how wild he used to look, and I felt sure he would murder me. You may smile, and so can I now at such a fancy ; but then it haunted me with all the ghastly distinctness of a dream. I used to fancy myself alone with him in his old Welsh castle, and I have almost perished with fright, picturing to myself that he would destroy me in some fit of jealous rage. If Captain Bohun had come forward then, and there was nothing to hinder it, nothing but the change in his own feelings: what a difference it would have made to both of us !”

Constance could not find out that she particularly wished for that difference, but she fully acquiesced in the remark.

“ Some people have a great deal to answer for ;” said Isabel.

Constance sighed.

“ I don’t mean to exculpate myself,” said Isabel ; “ but if mamma had dealt honestly between me and the only man I

ever cared for, I should have been a happy, perhaps a good woman."

"You can be good now, dear Isabel," said Constance gently.

"Oh Constance!" said Isabel rousing suddenly from her languor, and speaking with great earnestness; "how gladly would I transfer to mamma the sin of all I did against you, laying upon her cruel commands the falsehood of my own actions! I told her I would rather die than marry Lord Bevis, I said so just before we went to town. Then I met Mr. Forde, and I complained of my fate to him. Oh, Constance, never complain to a man, who—but you don't need admonition; you never did. And he first pitied me, and then swore he would lose the world for me, lose all—lose *you*! And I thought I could love him, and I hated Lord Bevis: it was all settled in town. We came home quietly, and that evening you came, you know, to see me before dinner, I would

have held back then, if I thought you had loved him as you or I *could* love !”

“ Poor Isabel,” said Constance.

“ He did not reproach me,” said Isabel ; “ but he shunned me ; I never shared one thought, one feeling with him. We had not spoken for days, when the news was brought me that he had put an end to his wretched life !”

Constance shuddered, and drew closer to Isabel who had fallen back in her chair, not senseless, indeed, but as pale and cold as if she were on the verge of a fainting fit.

“ You must not speak of those times,” said Constance ; “ you are not strong enough :—don’t think of them, dear ; you will be happy yet !”

“ Holloa ! Constance, are you ready ?” cried Edgar leaning in at the window, equipped with line and fishing-basket, “ it is a cloudy day, thank goodness ; and I shall catch a brace for your pet, Mrs. Agatha’s dinner.”

“ Oh ! go, dear,” said Isabel ; “ I shall like to be left here alone.”

“ Yes—I’ll come, Edgar ;” said Constance, ringing for her walking dress. “ That plague of a boy has found a wonderful stream, and I am to go fishing with him to see his prowess. There are books just at hand if you fancy them. Stay, I’ll take a volume of Coleridge with me, for these Pythagoreans, these anglers, won’t let you talk, Isabel !”

Constance found the hollow where the brook ran quite as beautiful as Edgar had promised it ; and she enjoyed herself very much under a hawthorn which looked as if it might date from the Druids, reading that beautiful fragment in the Sybilline Leaves, called the Picture, where one rich sketch of forest scenery follows another like the shows on a magic-lantern ; and where, like a jewel set in gold, another fragment is enclosed, in which with a distinctness perfectly artistical, a lover is described as gazing on the reflection

of his mistress in the water, until her own hand disturbs the even surface of the pool.

The lulling music of the verse, and all those sweet sounds common to a summer's noon, so passionately painted by Milton in *Il Penseroso*, chased each other through her brain, until she lost all note of time and place, and was startled, when after an interval long enough, as he thought, to tire her patience, Edgar made his appearance with the promised brace of trout glittering on the fresh-gathered grass at the bottom of his basket.

"I'll take you a short way to Mrs. Agatha's," said Edgar; "the sun has come out, and it's plaguy hot, we shall be in the shade across the fields as far as the stile, then over that bit of hill, and you are at your old pet's cottage."

"I wonder why he does not like her," said Constance, stopping to gather a branch of wild roses, "she is so remarkably kind in her manner."

“ I dare say !” returned Edgar ; “ when she calls me ‘ my dear,’ I wonder what they would think of her at school ?”

“ Oh ! then the murder is out !” exclaimed Constance ; “ poor Mrs. Agatha ! she does not understand the etiquette of boy’s society ! What is it to be ? Master Edgar—Mr. E. D’Oyley—his royal highness of—”

“ Constance, you stupid !”

“ Shall I hint to my friend the slight misunderstanding which exists ?”

“ Don’t, Constance !”

“ Well, I can’t deny that you have caught her two beautiful trout, so I must be content with that proof of your good will for the present.”

It was a little embarrassing to be sure. There was Mrs. Agatha standing in her pretty rustic porch, and Captain Bohun leaning over her little gate talking to her. Nothing passed for the first few minutes beyond the ordinary greetings ; for Edgar had to tell him all about the

trout and the way he caught them, which was a very interesting, and threatened to be a very long story.

“ But, really, catching them on purpose for me,” said Mrs. Agatha, when Constance had informed her of that circumstance, “ is a piece of gallantry I have not had addressed to me for many a long year. Why, my dear, I am afraid you will turn my poor head !”

Edgar coloured ; and Constance burst into one of her merry peals of laughter.

“ Oh ! Mrs. Agatha !” she cried ; “ he is a misanthrope, that boy ; he cannot endure to be called *my dear*.”

“ Upon my word,” said Mrs. Agatha very good-humouredly, “ I ought to have guessed as much ; when young gentlemen arrive at a certain age, it behoves us to be very careful in our modes of address. But an old woman, my dear—there again ! Mr. Edgar—may be allowed a little liberty of speech.”

“ But for you,” said Constance looking up at Captain Bohun, and speaking with an ease which surprised herself, “ Edgar has a much more grievous charge against you than against Mrs. Agatha. He has been asking everybody about the house when you were likely to visit us again. He has two or three secrets to tell you, I suppose, from his mysterious looks. You know his trick of wedging anybody against the window-panes, or into the corner of the room, and inflicting his confidence upon them ; but, whether he wants to be a heavy dragoon, or to make you guess the weight of the last carp he landed, I am quite at a loss to know.”

“ Of course,” said Edgar, “ I have many things to talk about that it would be of no use telling to girls.”

“ Oh ! then it's the commission,” returned Constance. “ The last advice Eustace gave him was to try to be one of them, or their's—or some such phrase.

His English is rather confused at times, verging, indeed, upon Arabic in the written character."

"Come, come!" said Mrs. Agatha; "if you are so severe upon your gay cousin, I shall know what to think."

Constance looked archly at Captain Bohun, and he answered her look by a smile of intelligence which showed that he was perfectly *au fait* of her position with her very attractive cousin.

"Could you," said she to Captain Bohun; "could you tell me whether the place of a trumpeter can be had like a tide-waiter's for the asking; because that, I know, is the extent of Edgar's ambition."

They all laughed heartily at this, even Edgar, though he muttered something about "paying her out" at some unknown period.

"But seriously," said Captain Bohun, "I have been wishing for some days to pay my respects to you; but I thought I might

be in your way as you have an invalid in the house."

"Not the least," returned Constance; "our invalid, I am sorry to say, keeps her room almost exclusively, and requires but little care since she spends much of her time alone. But I am glad to tell you that, in every other respect, she goes on much to the satisfaction of our good doctor."

Captain Bohun bowed to this piece of information; but regarded her earnestly, as if he did not quite understand why it should be addressed to him.

"She is a most interesting creature, poor young thing," said Mrs. Agatha; "I don't wonder, my dear, that your feelings were readily engaged; she has begun to win upon my affections even in this short time."

"Very well," replied Constance, "then come as often as you can to see her. You ought to have nothing to do; you would

not, if you were not so very kind to everybody ; so do spend a little of your charity upon us when you have any to spare."

"This young lady knows how to flatter, does she not, Captain Bohun?" asked Mrs. Agatha.

"I do believe not," he replied.

There was so much of heart in his tone, that it almost destroyed the composure on which Constance had prided herself.

She hurried away, saying to Mrs. Agatha . "This is a morning call, recollect, which will be registered against you ; so make haste to pay your debts."

Captain Bohun begged to be allowed to walk home with her ; but she tried to laugh off the request, and said it was a practice she never encouraged, and that she could not reconcile it to her conscience to deprive Mr. Agatha of her beaus.

He looked rather puzzled, she thought, but she hastened down the winding path-way with Edgar, and was soon out of sight of the porch and its inmates.

“ You are walking at a good round pace, this hot day, Miss Constance,” said Edgar, who seemed to find some little difficulty in keeping up with her. “ Why, good gracious! you are not crying, dear ; what is the matter ?”

“ Nothing, a mistake of yours,” said Constance turning away her head, “ but we may as well walk at a more reasonable rate. There is no hurry.”

CHAPTER VII.

You would be married, and less than ladies,
And of the best sort can serve you. Thou silk worm,
What hast thou in thee to deserve this woman ?
Thy clothes are all the soul thou hast.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

CONSTANCE found upon her return to the house that her mamma had had the pleasure of entertaining Sir Morgan Wyndham for the last quarter of an hour, a task that can hardly be appreciated by those who have not undergone a similar one.

A man of his ignorance and pretension overwhelms a woman with civilities when he has any motive for them ; but a woman neither young nor in possession of any

money which he is likely to come by, must expect, and I hope she may survive it, to be rudely neglected. Sir Morgan did not very well know what to say to Mrs. D'Oyley ; it was of no use to lean his arm over the back of her chair ; he was blindly ignorant of all ordinary literary topics ; he did not happen to comprehend needlework, and he had already mentioned the state of the weather. There was a solemn pause. It is true he could have told her a good many pleasing little anecdotes of the splendid dog which had followed him in, and which stood, with its magnificent head lifted above the library table, surveying its contents with an air of sagacity that its master might have well envied ! But the delicate and composed aspect of Mrs. D'Oyley, as she leaned in the deep arm chair and calmly pursued her work, somewhat daunted him from a display of his stable and kennel lore.

There is a natural antipathy in the mind of such a man to a woman who awes him.

He wished her in the Red Sea ; looked impatiently from the window ; and entertained something like an idea that he would call his next hunter Constance. He thought over the probable rent-roll of Leyton and its belongings ; wished that people could hunt in summer ; glanced at Mrs. D'Oyley, and discovered that she had a pretty foot, on the strength of which he took up the old topic of the weather, and remarked that the last two days had been unusually hot, and he should not wonder, if it were to end in a thunderstorm.

Mrs. D'Oyley thought it very likely.

“ Was she afraid of thunder ? ”

She confessed to feeling rather nervous if the storm was a severe one.

“ He hoped Miss D'Oyley was not apt to suffer from the same cause.

“ Not at all,” Mrs. D'Oyley replied, “ her daughter was remarkably free from nervous fears of any kind.”

Sir Morgan said he was delighted to hear it, and then came another pause. Sir

Morgan was thinking of what to say, a proceeding that generally ends in profound silence. It was at this crisis that Constance walked in, gave him good morning, and sat down to write a note. While she was doing so he said he was charmed to see her look so well, and he had been wretched for the last few days, because he had passed them with a friend in the next county, and had therefore been unable to wait upon her.

Constance, who was engrossed with her note, replied that she could easily imagine that; and rang for a taper. Sir Morgan suggested that there was a great deal of sympathy in their tastes; and Constance turning quickly round, asked him if he liked gingerbread. He replied in the negative, and she assured him with much gravity and a little reproach in her tone, that there was not a thing of any importance upon which they were agreed. The gentleman fell to protesting, and the lady sealed her note; while Sir Morgan ran his eye along

the fine range of timber which extended itself in every variety of group as far as the eye could reach, and thought how much of it should be felled when it belonged to him to pay his present debts, and how his first move of all would be to send poor Mrs. D'Oyley, (who sat unconscious on the other side of the room,) to the Antipodes.

“ Well, now,” said Constance, turning round with the utmost friendliness of manner, “ how did you come over ?”

“ I rode.”

“ The chestnut ?”

“ No, my bay mare.”

“ Oh ! but that is very wrong ; always ride the chestnut when you come hither because, when I go to the window to see you off, I have the pleasure of seeing the chestnut too. It is a great pleasure to me to see you ride off !”

This speech which was rather ambiguous, was seized by Sir Morgan as an earnest of her good intentions towards himself. Mrs.

D'Oyley raised her eyes to Constance, with a look of unfeigned astonishment ; and she, diverted beyond measure, that her meaning had been mistaken, turned aside, and buried her face in her pocket-handkerchief. Had Mrs. D'Oyley been absent, Sir Morgan would have been at her feet ; but as it was, he contented himself with vowing that her slightest wish was his law.

She was saved the trouble of a reply by the entrance of Tim for her note. She gave him very minute directions about taking it to the schoolmistress and waiting for an answer, to Sir Morgan's great discomfort, for he had prepared a fine speech, and it was gradually melting out of his head.

Just as Tim was going out of the room, he turned round, and said with a look of infinite glee, " Miss Constance, the bees is swarming ! "

" Are they ? I am so glad ! Where ? " cried Constance.

“ On the great pear tree, in the south garden, Miss,” said Tim ; “ there’s Master Edgar with the gardeners, and two of the boys, making such a noise !”

“ Is Anderson there ?” said Constance.

“ Yes, Miss,” said Tim ; “ and Mr. Anderson says it is a beautiful swarm.”

“ I shall go and see it,” returned Constance ; “ I am very much interested in my bees.”

“ My dear Constance,” said Mrs. D’Oyley, “ surely the bees can swarm without your assistance ; recollect, you were stung last time.”

“ For the sake of your nerves, then, my dear mamma, I will keep out of their way,” said Constance ; “ but I must go to the great staircase window, for I can see the pear tree there, and watch their doings.”

“ You must permit me to join you,” said Sir Morgan, “ I have so much pleasure in these—rustic—”

(He seldom knew how to complete a sentence.)

It was very far from the intention of Constance to have permitted this ; but she could not well refuse, and they took their places together at the staircase, she sitting on the window seat, and Sir Morgan leaning against the wall by her side, in what he thought a very striking attitude. They could see the pear tree, and a small black cloud waving and moving about it previously to settling.

It so happened, that Isabel was going from her dressing-room to the morning-room at this moment, and was passing by the window. Constance stopped her.

“Look here, dear Isabel,” said she, “did you ever see bees swarm ? I bought my hive of an old woman in the village ; and she said I should have no luck, unless I gave her gold for them. I gave her gold ; and you see I have a swarm, the first year.”

Isabel smiled faintly, and leaned forward to see what was going on.

Sir Morgan fixed on her face that remorseless stare, which empty-headed men of the present day think themselves privileged to bestow on women who please them.

She did not perceive it, however. Gently extricating herself from the detaining hand of her friend, she moved quietly across the landing into the morning-room.

"Who is that amazingly beautiful creature?" exclaimed Sir Morgan as the door closed upon her.

"My friend, Mrs. Forde," replied Constance.

Sir Morgan repented of his warmth. "Ah! a widow, poor thing!" he stammered. "I dare say the dress sets her off; there's something in—"

"Not at all, in her case," said Constance. "She was more beautiful before,

and will be again. Her loss is very recent."

"Ah ! indeed ;" said Sir Morgan. But he had been so struck by the beauty of Isabel, that it absolutely silenced him.

Constance meanwhile sat gazing into the garden, and drawing a parallel in her mind, between her present suitor and her cousin Eustace.

"Both are very ignorant," she thought, "both love hunting. I wonder whether all men who love hunting, are naturally stupid. No, I should think not ; Lord Bevis is a desperate rider, and he is remarkably intelligent ; but I think Eustace has most originality in his dulness, he is so gloriously contented with it ; and then he has some honesty about him. Now this man is a knave !"

It is just as well that people should not know what the person at their elbow is thinking about. They would not always be much gratified if they did.

Sir Morgan in his turn was dreaming over the beauty of Isabel, and wishing that she possessed the broad acres which belonged to her less gifted friend.

"Now that there is nothing more to see, I am going," said Constance.

"And I must take my leave, I fear," said Sir Morgan.

Constance nodded.

"I am going to Lady Bohun's," he said; "can I do anything for you there?"

"Nothing at all," returned Constance, who was determined never to employ him on any errand that might lead to the belief that they were intimate.

"When does her archery fête come off; do you know?" he asked, as they went down.

"Some time, in this month," returned Constance.

"Do you mean to try for a prize?"

"Yes, I shall shoot. I can hit the target somewhere or other, by this time."

"I shall certainly bet upon you," he said.

"Pray do," returned Constance, "only let me warn you not to bet anything very extravagant on my performance ; because, I know I shall be decidedly the worst shot at the meeting."

"I am sure you will not ; in fact, you can do nothing—you excel in all that—"

"Of course," said Constance, "I was born with a propensity to do everything right ; only, I have not cultivated this propensity so highly as some others, that's all. No, indeed, I shall not see you off to-day, as you are riding that stupid bay."

"You may be sure I shall recollect your *penchant* for the chestnut. Good morning."

"Insufferable coxcomb !" said she, as she went up to her mamma's dressing-room.

"My very dear Constance," said Mrs. D'Oyley, "I am glad to see you for a few moments before dinner. What you have been dreaming about this morning is a wonder to me ; for you surely cannot mean

to give serious encouragement to that very trifling person."

Constance stood selecting the flowers with which she meant to make her mamma's nosegay.

"I rise to explain," she said, with a saucy little smile. "Are we poor women to keep all the goodness to ourselves, my dear mamma? Is it not a little hard that they should play upon our feelings in every possible way, and that we should never be allowed to return the compliment? May we not be a little naughty now and then?"

"Oh no! dear Constance," said Mrs. D'Oyley; "if they allow themselves such latitude of moral action, let us retain the pre-eminence in strict integrity; and particularly in matters which the law cannot reach—in matters of honour. I know this man does not wish for your heart; but if you allow him to hope for your house and lands, when you do not mean to give them to him; is that, dear Constance, truly honest?"

“ Not altogether ‘ the high Roman fashion,’ dear mamma ; and I really will amend,” she replied ; “ but if you only knew the pleasure of a little retaliation ! ”

CHAPTER VIII.

And love that cannot find a voice, will spend
Its fancies in unreal bitterness.
Chiding, instead of its own silent heart,
The object it would win.

ANON.

Old ponds, dim shadowed with a broken tree,
These are the picturesque of taste to me ;
While panting winds, to make complete the scene,
In rich confusion mingle every green.

CLARE.

By this time Isabel was more tranquil, and more domesticated than she had been at Leyton. She saw no company, but she had very little choice in that respect ; few guests were admitted on account of Mr. D'Oyley's infirmity. She moved about the house at will ; busied herself in the con-

servatory, or among the flowers disposed in the large hall windows ; and sometimes, when Constance was very urgent, consented to a short stroll in the grounds.

Mrs. Agatha was often her companion, and the kind old lady seemed to feel a real affection for the beautiful and unprotected creature who had been so unexpectedly added to her very small circle of friends.

On such occasions, Constance was very willing to resign her place beside her, and join Edgar and Lord Bevis in their rides. One morning, Mrs. Agatha having come early, was seized upon by Constance as her natural property for the rest of the day ; and as it happened to be tolerably cool, that morning, she was easily persuaded by Edgar that the proper thing to do was to make one of the riding party. So he scampered off to the stables, with Tim after him, to see that his sister's horse was looking his best, and did not require to have his mane combed, a ceremony which he seemed to

think could not be performed often enough ; and to inspect the girths of her saddle twenty times, with his head very much on one side, and his whip held tight under his arm.

Edgar was very proud of Constance on horseback. None of the other ladies in the neighbourhood looked so well, he thought. He admired her picturesque Vandyke gloves, and the clusters of curls that prevented her hat from spoiling her countenance ; and the sweep of her long, dark, blue habit, and the little delicate riding whip slung to her wrist. Constance did not ride by any means so well as her cousin Mary ; but she looked ten times prettier, “ that was all he knew about it.”

And now they were mounted and off ; Lord Bevis holding in his fiery Arabian to the more composed paces of the horse which Constance rode. They proceeded through the village, and the shady lane beyond, just catching a glimpse, as they swept by, of the cheerful face of Mrs. Agatha's little maid at her

lattice, as she looked up from her work ; and then galloped like lightning over the wide downs and along the hill-side, crushing the wild thyme under their feet, and scattering the pebbles, and flinging up a perfect shower of water as they dashed through the shallow brook without drawing rein ; and then paced slowly under the wide-spreading oaks beyond. Constance was half laughing and quite breathless, and Edgar was pulling up with an appearance of extreme nonchalance, and lifting his hat to enjoy the benefit of the soft south wind.

“ Pretty well that,” said he.

“ Put your hat on straight, please” said Constance, imploringly.

“ There then,” said Edgar, giving the hat the proper inclination over his brows.

“ You contrive to make every one obey you, Miss D'Oyley,” said Lord Bevis.

“ Do I ? Then let me leap that little fence !”

“ Pray don't. Mrs. D'Oyley trusted you to my discretion, remember.”

“I am sure Clematis could do it.”

“Of course,” said Edgar, “he would take it fast enough, and pitch you over his head into the bargain.”

“Now I am determined on it,” cried Constance; “get out of the way both of you!”

“Take care!” they exclaimed together; but before they had spoken, she was safe on the other side.

As they were riding up the avenue, they encountered Captain Bohun who had just entered the park gates.

He told Constance he was glad to meet her, for he was the bearer of a message to her from Lady Bohun; and he drew up his horse as if he meant to give it on the spot.

“Indeed,” said Constance; “come into the house and tell it me.”

“If you will allow me I will deliver it at once,” he said, “I have not a moment to spare. It is about the archery meeting: will you have white hats or green?”

“White, with an acorn wreath;

but you must come in while I write a note."

"Surely you will trust my memory with so short a reply," said Captain Bohun, "particularly as I very much admire your taste."

"No, I wish to send Lady Bohun a sketch of the archery dress which I don't carry about with me. Do come in. I wonder what papa has done that you have not been to see him so long. I see as plainly what you are thinking about, as if you took the trouble to tell me. You had better have it over, unless you mean to leave us altogether."

Before she had done speaking, Captain Bohun had dismounted and was handing her up the hall steps.

Isabel was seated in an arm chair near one of the French windows in the drawing-room, Mrs. D'Oyley working beside her.

She turned her head languidly as the party entered, and coloured deeply at the sight of Captain Bohun.

He bowed to her without speaking, and began a conversation with Mrs. D'Oyley.

Constance went to a table a little behind Isabel, and turned over a blotting-book.

“ Oh ! Lord Bevis.”

“ Miss D'Oyley !”

“ You said you would draw me a sketch of the archery dress. Will you ?”

“ With pleasure ; but I can only give you the shape of it ; I don't pretend to draw.”

“ Here is pen and ink ; now something very pretty !”

“ I am sure you don't wish for any thing pretty, unless it happen to be authentic.”

“ I am sure I shall wear nothing ugly. Now do be so kind as to invent a better sleeve ; I don't like that one.”

“ It is correct.”

“ No matter. I am obliged to keep you waiting, Captain Bohun !”

"You are very good! I am not at all pressed for time."

"I know that you could perfectly well stay to dinner if you chose."

"Is that an invitation, Miss D'Oyley?"

"Suppose it were, would you accept it?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"Then, mamma, would you be so kind as to put it in form. Really, some morning, I'll learn all proper modes of address out of the book of etiquette."

"Captain Bohun knows that he is a very welcome guest," said Mrs. D'Oyley in her usually composed manner.

"Do you mean that for a likeness of me, Lord Bevis?" said Constance who was watching the progress of the drawing.

"Of course, don't you think it very successful?"

"Oh! mamma, look! look, Isabel!"

Mrs. Forde smiled faintly, and took the paper.

“ I think there is something of her air,” said Mrs. D'Oyley.

“ It is quite unintentional then,” said Lord Bevis smiling. “ You don't suppose, Miss D'Oyley, that I should presume to attempt your face in this off-hand manner.”

“ I should be only too flattered by the circumstance. Now, thank you first for the drawing ; and now, Captain Bohun, ride off to Lady Bohun with this sketch, and then come back to dinner.”

“ I shall be too happy,” said Captain Bohun.

“ Exactly. Had you any other message for me that you have forgotten ?”

“ If I had, I have, as you say, forgotten it.”

Lord Bevis pointed to some lines in a book that lay open before him. Constance stooped down and read them :

With thee conversing I forget all time,
All seasons and their change.

“How fond you are of that old, radical Milton,” said she pushing away the book. “I really don’t believe you are a Tory at heart.”

“I have a strong partiality for the people,” he returned.

“People or populace?” asked Constance.

“Oh! I like them in any shape, as your friend Sir Morgan said of the oysters, the other day.”

“And what do we all mean to do till dinner time?” asked Constance. “I am going to papa.”

Isabel had left the room.

“I am going to persuade Mrs. Agatha to walk with me in the flower-garden,” said Lord Bevis.

“I shall follow that poor thing,” said Mrs. D'Oyley folding up her work, “I am afraid she is not so well to-day.”

At dinner, Mrs. Forde did not appear. Constance fancied that Captain Bohun

looked anxious and disappointed. She began to talk to him about Isabel, and when he looked a little bored, she fancied he was weary of her conversation ; and she gave him no more of it during dinner. It was in vain that he sought to address her on a variety of subjects, his last attempt was an inquiry after a pair of ponies that she had been very anxious to have trained for a low carriage ; upon this she referred him to Lord Bevis, who, she said was a judge of such matters, which for her part she hated. He very quietly transferred his inquiries to Lord Bevis ; and soon after the ladies went into the drawing-room.

There, after a few minutes' conversation with Isabel, Constance took Mrs. Agatha out into the garden to see her new azalias.

“ And pray, little lady,” said Mrs. Agatha, looking quaintly at Constance, “ what has Captain Bohun been about that he has fallen under your sovereign displeasure ? ”

"Nothing at all," replied Constance. "I did not know he was under my displeasure."

"I merely judged by the short answers you gave to all his remarks at dinner."

"That was because he bored me by talking about horses," said Constance; "it is very strange how some people do delight in talking of animals! I am sure it is a sign they can talk of nothing else: there is Sir Morgan now! Somebody in Blackwood's days, 'without literature or manners, I hardly see how a man can be a gentleman,' I always long to show Sir Morgan that sentence."

"Yes, we were talking of Captain Bohun," said Mrs. Agatha, smiling.

"I don't know how it was we were talking of him," said Constance; "when a subject is not attractive, it is better to change it. If you like to cultivate azalias, I will send you some plants; but with your

fine bog earth it is a sin that you should grow anything but rhododendrons."

Mrs. Agatha accepted the offer of some azalias, and they sauntered on in silence for some time.

At last Constance exclaimed with much indignation: "And he is so proud too!"

"That is a great objection," said Mrs. Agatha. "Are we still speaking of Sir Morgan?"

Constance could not help laughing, but she turned to go back to the house without making any reply.

"Don't be capricious, my dear," said Mrs. Agatha, detaining her for a moment as she was about to enter, "because those people who won't bear caprice are generally those whose esteem is most worth preserving."

The gentlemen had just come into the drawing-room, and Mrs. D'Oyley had rung for tea. Captain Bohun was talking to her father, and showed no other indication of her being present, than moving out

of the way as Constance took her place at the tea-table. Mrs. Agatha offered her services, but Constance declined them.

"I mean to perfect myself in the art of tea-making, though Lord Bevis does look so disappointed," she said. "You know, Mrs. Agatha, he always held you up as a pattern of the domestic virtues."

"I thought you made tea very well, my dear !" said Mrs. Agatha.

"Miss D'Oyley is so ambitious," said Lord Bevis, "she is never content unless she surpasses everybody."

"I shall tell Mary when I write how severe you have become," said Constance. "By-the-bye, I had a letter from her to-day."

"Indeed," said Lord Bevis, drawing his chair nearer ; "why you never told me so !"

"Well, I am going to tell you now. She is so sorry to have left Leyton ; she misses me so much !"

“ I have no doubt of it.”

“ And all our rides together ! By-the-bye, what a delightful ride we had this morning ; I do think this is the most beautiful part of all our beautiful country.”

“ So it is. That lane with the oaks meeting overhead !”

“ And the deep pool by the side, with the dragon-flies ; where Edgar caught one that evening !”

“ You ought to sketch, you know, Miss D'Oyley ; it is a great defect.”

“ I am too old to learn, you know, Lord Bevis ; besides I think it vulgar to draw. You see every pert little school-girl with a portfolio of scratches. But I intend you to make me a study of that pond with the crooked ash trees, and some cows standing half-way in the water, some straggling over the bank, just as they were the other evening ; and the hill side beyond, and the sunlight chequering everything. Can you draw sunlight ?”

“Undoubtedly; everything you wish to have drawn, must be drawn.”

“I’ll do a great many things in return, for you.”

“Thank you. Will you give me another cup of tea?”

“This instant. Isabel, I shall scold you for not eating anything. Lord Bevis, carry this cake to Isabel, and tell her it is the very lightest nothing she can take.”

“To set your mind at rest? Because there is no other reason why she should eat when she does not like it.”

“You will do exactly as I bid you,” said Constance. “Men have no idea of nursing or being nursed. You owe all your comfort to our sex, and all your civilization. I am never tired of thinking how much better women are than men.”

Everybody laughed at this speech, and Mr. D'Oyley asked Constance how the matter could be settled, since both parties were interested witnesses.

Mrs. Agatha went to talk to Mrs. Forde, Edgar was very busy with a book at his mamma's work-table, and Constance drew her chair to the piano ; but before she began to play, she turned to Captain Bohun, and said to him distinctly, but with some embarrassment :

"Perhaps you will be so good as to show those views of Palestine to Mrs. Forde, she was wishing to see them this morning."

Captain Bohun professed his willingness to do so, and crossed over to Isabel with the portfolio.

She had not finished her first set of waltzes, when a servant announced Sir Morgan Wyndham, who paid his compliments hastily round the circle, and then seated himself behind her chair.

"Such a very unusual hour to make a call !" said he, "but I thought you looking rather pale at Church yesterday, and therefore I could not deny myself the pleasure of assuring myself that you were quite restored to-day."

"No. Do you go to Church?" said Constance, turning round and surveying him with much surprise.

"Yes," returned Sir Morgan, "I make a point of attending that sort of thing. I think it quite proper to patronise—"

"The Christian religion. How very kind!" said Constance.

"Yes; you know we are all Conservatives," said Sir Morgan, "and it always goes together."

"Going to Church and going, whither?" asked Constance.

"I mean, you know, it is so ungentlemanly to cut the Church."

"Ah! I shall understand you in time," replied Constance.

"Meanwhile, Miss D'Oyley, will you sing me the 'Return of the Admiral,'" said Lord Bevis.

Sir Morgan, who for some time had been staring hard at Isabel, and wondering where he had seen something like the perfect oval of her face enclosed in the widow's cap,

nōw lounged up to her, and began a desultory conversation. But Isabel, whose spirits were unequal to the exertion, gave him so little assistance, that after an exchange of a few interrupted sentences, he retreated back to Miss D'Oyley, half afraid that, as it was, she would perceive how much he was charmed by the singular beauty of her friend.

In fact, Isabel, who was very unfit to bear the fatigue of society, rose and retired to her room, and then Sir Morgan took occasion to learn whether or not she was well endowed.

He said carelessly to Constance, that her beautiful friend seemed very languid, that evening, to which she assented with a sigh. He then hinted that he hoped so fair a creature was likely to be always surrounded by every comfort and luxury that wealth could bestow.

Constance replied: "That few people might be said to have wealth more at their command, for that if she had a mind to

contract a second marriage, her beauty would always secure her an advantageous settlement."

This reply not containing the information which Sir Morgan sought, he was compelled to defer his curiosity till he could consult some one else.

As Captain Bohun took leave of Constance, he expressed a hope, in a low tone, that she had forgiven his offences.

"Why, what have you done?" exclaimed Constance, looking up in some astonishment.

"Nay, that I don't know," said he, smiling, "but I venture to hope that I may be forgiven, notwithstanding."

"You are laughing at me," said Constance. "You mean to ask whether I can forgive myself for being angry without a cause. I'll tell you when next we meet."

"But for the present—" said he hesitating.

"Oh! we part on excellent terms," said Constance; "good night."

“I hope, Miss D'Oyley, you mean to take as circumstantial a leave of me,” said Sir Morgan, who had watched with some little pique the half whispered conversation between herself and Captain Bohun.

“By no means,” replied Constance ; and turning round to the piano, she began to play a very loud march, which effectually drowned any remonstrance he might mean to offer.

CHAPTER IX.

EROS.—I want your absence,

Keep on your way, I care not for your company.

SEP.—How? how? You are very short; do you know
me, Eros?

EROS.—Yes, I know ye.

And I hope I shall forget ye.

THE FALSE ONE.

IMO.—You are as welcome, worthy friends, as I

Have words to bid you; and shall find it so
In all that I can do.

CYMBELINE.

“I MUST put a stop to this some way or other,” said Constance to herself, as she came into the library, the next morning, after her stroll into the park, and found Sir Morgan awaiting her return; “this won’t do at all!”

Lord Bevis was talking to her father ; poor Mrs. D'Oyley had been afflicted with the Baronet for about five minutes, and looked rather less tired and bored than if she had been annoyed by him for a quarter of an hour. But it is somewhat difficult to avoid speaking to a person who comes to your house on purpose to see you.

Sir Morgan was at her side in a moment, and although she had, after nodding to him, taken her mamma's knitting from her, and affected to find some terrible mistake in the stitch, she was obliged to look round, and reply to his anxious inquiries.

“ No, nothing very terrible ; but a wrong colour begun in this row ; you will not be able to do any good.”

“ I wish I could remedy—”

“ No doubt you do , and if I were you, now, that there is no hunting going forward, I would begin to learn all the known stitches. It would very much increase your value in society.”

"I think I shall take your advice."

"Do you know how to net?"

"I am sorry to say I do not."

"There now! I have a cousin who can net a little. He does it all wrong; but there must be a beginning to everything."

"Certainly, I wish I—"

"Can you do carpet work?"

"Yes, I can manage that a little."

"Well; have the kindness, will you, to go on with this dahlia; count the stitches, mind, here is the pattern."

"I shall be successful, I am sure, as long as you are kind enough to remain here to inspire me."

"Very likely; but I am soon going to look at my seedling geraniums," said Constance taking up her work.

"Do you undertake to open an academy for needlework," said Lord Bevis crossing over to her.

"Not for dunces," said Constance. "I am sure you would do me no credit. Stay, you may go on a little with this slipper."

No! don't hold your needle so. Ah! the scissors. You will cut the canvass! Papa! Lord Bevis is working on your slipper! There, you shall do one whole violet. Papa! I will tell you how I have arranged your slippers. A little cluster of violets in the front of each. You have no idea how fine the threads are; it will be just like painting. Don't laugh, Lord Bevis; I mean common painting."

"Something in the way of oriental tinting," said Lord Bevis.

"Is not this rose delicious, papa;" said Constance seating herself by his side on the sofa.

"It is, indeed, my dear. What sort of rose is it? Something new?"

"Yes, a small double cluster rose; it grows all over my Tudor window. What are you about, Lord Bevis?"

"Nothing but mischief, I am afraid, Miss D'Oyley, I had better give you your work back again."

Constance took her slipper, and remained leaning on her papa's shoulder, working and talking. "Do you know, papa, Mrs. Agatha told me such a strange story of the people who lived once in the Harris's house. There was a man, who— Go, and sit down, Lord Bevis ; how is it possible I can tell papa my story while you are standing—close to this footstool, papa—and looking straight into my face ?"

"I will sit down, with pleasure, Miss D'Oyley ; but I would not for the world miss hearing your story. I have a great curiosity to know what sort of a man it was who lived in the Harris's house."

"I know you are laughing," returned Constance ; "but papa shall have my story for all that. I ought first to tell you that the grandmother of this man was a very eccentric person, and— Oh ! Sir Morgan, let me see how you are getting on. That is, really, very well done. I

did not think you were so clever—there, now, I have quite done with you ; I don't want you any more to-day."

At this abrupt announcement of her feelings, Mrs. D'Oyley raised her head, and gave her daughter a gently reproving look ; but Constance, who had more accurately measured the Baronet's sensibilities, merely smiled in return.

" You will allow me to remain, I hope," said Sir Morgan, " to hear this anecdote which we are all expecting so impatiently."

" What anecdote ?"

" The one about the Harris's house."

" Oh ! I have forgotten all about it. Your carpet work has driven it out of my head ; but you do not mean to run away so soon ? We are going to luncheon in a few minutes."

" I shall be delighted—"

" I wonder whether Evans means to be punctual to-day," said Lord Bevis ; " I have a mind to ride over to H—— before dinner."

“ Oh ! if you are going to H——, I have a hundred things for you to do for me,” cried Constance.

“ You never will employ me,” whispered Sir Morgan.

“ Yes, I will ; you may hold this skein of wool for me in a minute, when I have written down my commissions for Lord Bevis.”

“ How is all this to end, my dear Mrs. D'Oyley ?” said Lord Bevis, glancing at Constance and Sir Morgan as they sat near together ; Sir Morgan dutifully holding the skein as directed, and Constance talking over her shoulder to Edgar as she wound it.”

Mrs. D'Oyley shook her head.

“ But, who are these people driving up to the house ?” exclaimed Constance ; “ look, Edgar ! Are they any of our neighbours, Sir Morgan ?”

Sir Morgan, with the skein of scarlet worsted still on his hands, went to the window, and declared that the ark which

was approaching the house, bore no resemblance to any carriage of his acquaintance.

Edgar, who thought it was very witty to call the carriage an ark, leaned out of the window, partly to hide his laughter, and partly to investigate the appearance of the ladies, who were now alighting on the front steps. "Why, Constance," he cried, suddenly drawing back, "who would have thought it, here come Mrs. Manley and her daughters!"

"Is it possible," exclaimed Constance; "I am heartily glad to see anybody from C——."

She rose so hastily, that she threw down her basket of worsteds, and leaving Sir Morgan to collect the many coloured balls, she advanced to meet them almost on the threshold. Her warmth was met with an equal show of ardour. It was very agreeable to know Miss D'Oyley of Leyton.

They were about to make a little excur-

sion in Wales, and made a point, they said, of taking Leyton in their way ; they were so anxious to see dear Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley and Constance again. It was soon arranged that they should remain with the D'Oyleys until the next day, to give time for both parties to talk over all that had happened since they parted. Their carriage was sent round, Constance rang to hurry the luncheon, and having persuaded the young ladies to lay aside their bonnets, which was not very easily done, for the girls had been younger, and they were afraid their hair might be tumbled, they all went into the dining-room to eat and drink, before they had any more conversation.

Sir Morgan, though he wished to ingratiate himself with Constance, did not think it necessary to extend his fascinations to her friends, perhaps, because he was conscious that he had very little to spare ; therefore, he allowed Lord Bevis

to help them to cold chicken, and wine and water, without attempting to give him any assistance. The Manleys were rather the gainers by this circumstance, for like many English people of a middling station, they had a wonderful affection for a title, and to have been waited upon by a Lord would furnish them with matter of exultation for the remainder of their lives. In fact, Edgar having disappeared before luncheon, the task of attending to them fell exclusively upon Lord Bevis, and he caused considerable agitation to Miss Harriet by cutting her a piece of bread, while Miss Louisa experienced even greater emotion at his rising to bring her some salad from a side-table.

“Where is Mrs. Forde?” asked Mr. D'Oyley; “I do not hear her voice.”

“She will not come down until dinner,” said Constance; “I ordered some jelly to be sent up into her dressing-room.”

Mrs. Manley began whispering and nodding to Mrs. D'Oyley. It really *was*

true then. They had heard so ! But really, such magnanimity ! And how was Mrs. Forde looking ? Of course, she must be delicate, it was not likely that under the circumstances— A few more nods and becks saved her from rounding off the period.

“ Can you tell me anything of Lady Hernshaw ? ” asked Constance of her neighbour, Miss Louisa.

“ Oh, yes ! we often see her about. She very seldom gives parties now. I think she looks older ; but she is, you know, a very reserved person. She never mentions her daughter ; and she holds herself so much above all her neighbours, that nobody is likely to ask her any questions.”

“ And how is Mrs. Barlow at the Mill ? ”

“ Very well, I believe,” said Miss Manley, colouring a little.

“ And all the other good people whom I knew ? ”

“ I think I can answer for them all ; they are just as you left them.”

“ Have you heard,” said Mrs. Manley,

“that Mr. Aycliffe is going to be married?”

“No,” cried Constance; “but I am very glad to hear it: and to whom?”

“Oh! stop, mamma, don’t tell; let Constance guess,” exclaimed both the Miss Manleys.

“I am quite at a loss,” said Constance, laughing; “but I really hope that he has not gone out of the village for a wife, there are so many ladies in C—.”

“I assure you,” said Miss Manley, with some little vexation in her voice, “that he has not paid C— so great a compliment.”

“Then I give it up at once,” said Constance, “for I knew no families out of C—, except the Hiltons, and I am sure, that is, I think I may be sure, that Mary is not going to marry Mr. Aycliffe!”

As she said this, she stole a mischievous glance at Lord Bevis, in the hope of seeing him look a little confused, but he replied very quietly:

“No ; from what I recollect of Mr. Ayliffe, I should say that he was not the sort of person to win Miss Hilton.”

“I would never venture to say that,” said Mrs. Manley, very reverently, however, for she was contradicting a Lord, and that was a serious matter to her ; “you can never tell until a gentleman offers whether he will be accepted. I am sure I have seen numbers of people accepted, whom I should never have believed the lady would have thought of. I think an offer is a very tempting thing to a young lady, unless she happens to be engaged.”

“What do you say to that, Lord Bevis ?” asked Constance.

“Why, Miss D'Oyley, as I am not a young lady, I conclude that I am no judge of the temptation.”

“Ah ! you know what I mean,” said Constance ; “but, my dear Miss Manley, pray do not keep me any longer in suspense ; let me hear the name of the fair lady.”

“What would you say to Miss Jane Bland?” asked Miss Manley.

“The very last woman in the world,” exclaimed Constance; “utterly unsuited to him. Why I recollect at Uncle Hilton’s, at the ball with all the officers—”

“But people alter so much, my dear Miss D’Oyley,” said Mrs. Manley; “so many giddy girls make excellent wives!”

“And recollect, Miss D’Oyley,” said Lord Bevis, “that people never marry the person they are set down for.”

“All true!” replied Constance, “but still I think Jane Bland suited to almost any one rather than Mr. Ayliffe.”

“Ah! Miss D’Oyley,” said Sir Morgan, as they were all leaving the dining-rooms, “if I did but know what that happy man would resemble, who—who—”

“A bishop,” said Constance, cheerfully. “I have one in my eye; there is something irresistible in the lawn sleeves. Don’t stand, please, in the door-way, be-

cause I must go and attend to my visitors."

Mrs. Manley preferred remaining quietly in the house during the heat of the day, but the young ladies expressed great delight at the idea of exploring the pleasure-grounds under the guidance of Constance.

They expressed the usual ecstasies at the sight of the conservatories and forcing-houses, and the beautiful plants that adorned her own particular garden.

Constance, with a blue veil wrapped completely round her face and bonnet, for she was very much afraid of freckles, wandered from one sunny bed to another, and gathered for her visitors clusters of beautiful and rare flowers. At last they sat down on a shady bench, and began to arrange their spoils into different nosegays.

"And so," said Constance, "Mr. Ayliffe is really going to be married. Do tell me if there are any more matches on the tapis."

Miss Dyce, now ! There was a sort of probability, I hardly know what to call it, that she was likely to marry Mr. Linley."

" Oh ! that affair is just where it was," said Miss Manley. " When he is rich enough ! If he could but change his curacy into a good living, then people would say he need not despair. But that will never be ; or at least no prospect can be so uncertain and distant."

" Mamma does not like these long engagements," said the younger sister. " You want a sprig of jessamine, dear Constance ; this will just do. How fortunate you are ; your engagement need never be a long one."

" True !" said Miss Manley ; " and you need never marry at all if you don't particularly wish it. You will be just as much respected with your splendid property as if you were a married woman."

Constance thought with some pleasure, that when she had no property at all, she had preferred remaining single to marrying a person whom she did not particularly

like ; but there is no occasion to be more refined than your company, so she merely laughed, and told Miss Manley that she was very likely to illustrate her position, and that she should be curious to see how society would use her when she was an old maid.

“That was a very elegant young man sitting next to you at luncheon,” said Miss Louisa ; “there was something very aristocratic in his manner.”

Do you think so ?” returned Constance. “He is an idle neighbour of ours, who comes here oftener than any of us like.”

“Yes,” said Miss Manley, “particularly with that charming Lord Bevis staying in the house !” Here she looked as fixedly as she could at Constance’s purple veil.

“But between you and me, dear Miss Manley,” said Constance, “Lord Bevis shows a very bad taste, he has not shown the least disposition to marry me ; and really, when you consider the pounds he

would be in pocket by such a speculation—”

She was interrupted by the approach of Lord Bevis himself, who came to tell Constance that he had executed her commissions at H—. He readily accepted a seat by her side, and then, taking her bouquet from her, began to suggest some improvements in its arrangement.

“You want a moss rose-bud very much just here, Miss D'Oyley;” here Miss Manley timidly offered one. “Thank you, this will do very well. And some long grass would be an improvement. There, Miss D'Oyley, you will be very effective to-day at dinner, I promise you. Any body coming?”

“No. You are the only gentleman we shall have, except papa.”

“And I am nobody; what a misfortune! Suppose I send a line to Bohun, and ask him to take pity on me?”

“You can do as you like.”

"Do you think he will come, Miss D'Oyley?"

"I dare say not. He is likely to have plenty of engagements; and besides, he was here yesterday."

"That means that you would rather he did not come."

"Yes it does," returned Constance, quickly.

"Very well. I wish ladies would not wrap up their heads in those thick veils; it must be distressing to them this hot weather, and I am sure it is very disagreeable to us. I like to see the person I am talking to. Don't you agree with me, Miss Manley?"

"Ha! ha! Yes, I think—"

"Is it near dressing time?" asked Constance.

"It wants half an hour," replied Lord Bevis. "Why don't you wear a watch, Miss D'Oyley?"

"I forgot to wind it up last night—that is all."

“ Give it me, and I will set it right for you.”

“ There !” said Constance. “ Has Mrs. Agatha been here to-day, do you know ?”

“ She was just arrived when I returned from my ride ; but as she asked for Mr. D'Oyley, I did not let you know.”

“ I shall see her at dinner,” said Constance, “ and I know she has something to talk to papa about. Something about Isabel.”

“ Why, Mrs. Agatha dined here yesterday,” said Lord Bevis. “ You don't object to *her* company two days running, I find.”

“ I think that a very silly remark,” returned Constance, in a very unconcerned voice. “ I am quite ready to admit that Mrs. Agatha is one of the few persons whom I should be glad to see every day.”

“ It would be an excellent plan, I think,” said Lord Bevis, “ that Mrs. Forde should eventually reside with Mrs. Agatha.”

“ Yes, some day or other,” replied Constance ; “ but there is no sort of hurry.

It will be very pleasant for me to have two friends established at the little white cottage instead of one."

"Do you know how she was left, poor thing, in regard to money matters?" asked Miss Manley.

"She will have but a small income," said Constance; "but living in the way we propose, she will feel, I hope, but few inconveniences from her straightened means; and I don't expect, that is, it is not very likely—I mean," said she, her voice faltering a little, "so beautiful a creature will hardly remain a widow always."

Lord Bevis coughed a little, the Manleys did not venture to look at him; but they felt extremely curious to know whether Constance alluded to him or not.

"Your imagination is very active, Miss D'Oyley" he said, at last; "have you already provided a match for your fair friend?"

"I have provided nothing," said Constance, rather pettishly; "but I suppose

I have eyes. I have stated nothing but what is very probable."

"You certainly cannot deny that you have some special person in your eye," said Lord Bevis laughing, "I dare say I shall be able to guess. I am afraid my friend Edgar will be too young."

"Of course. You are so silly this morning," said Constance, rising. "I think, my dear Miss Manley, it is time for us to dress."

"I should not at all wonder," said Lord Bevis, rising also, "that you thought of transferring over Sir Morgan's allegiance to Mrs. Forde."

"You thought!" exclaimed Constance, who was growing angry.

"Still wide of the mark, am I?—Perhaps you think that Captain Bohun rides over now and then to get a peep of your beautiful friend. I believe you will acquit *me*, won't you?"

"I shall not answer any of your questions; but you will be kind enough to tell

me whether the man at H—— means to sell me that little Sky terrier ; if you didn't forget all about it."

"The man asks too much, and——"

"Oh ! but Edgar has set his heart upon it ; so I cannot help its being dear. I must have it."

"I was going to say, that Captain Bohun has promised Edgar one of his Sky terriers, which is quite ugly and savage enough to content him ; so you need not give the man at H—— an opportunity of cheating you."

"Certainly not. And when did Edgar see Captain Bohun?"

"To-day, when we were out riding."

"Edgar rode with you then."

"He did."

"Well, I am glad he is about to have a Sky terrier at last, poor fellow."

"Oh ! it is a great advantage ; it will initiate him into the mysteries of rat-hunting, besides the great chance those small dogs always have of going mad."

“Not thorough-bred dogs,” said Constance, stepping into the drawing-room through the glass window. “Is not he disagreeable, my dear Miss Manley?”

Miss Manley could not allow it. She thought his manners so remarkably pleasing and cheerful.

“Don’t you think, Harriet,” said Mrs. Manley, just before they went down to dinner, “that Constance D’Oyley is very much improved?”

“Wonderfully!” said Miss Manley; “her manners are so much more attractive; and then she dresses so well!”

Constance had always dressed with taste, and always possessed the same frank cheerful manners. In her case a fortune merely brought forward the qualities she really possessed—in many cases it supplies them altogether.

Mr. Sedley, the Rector, dined with them. He was a grave, elderly man, benevolent and rather dignified in his manner. He was on terms of intimacy with the family,

and he thought very highly of Constance, for her liberality in the parish was not confined to giving alone, but led her to take trouble wherever Mr. Sedley thought her interference would be beneficial. He had a good deal to say to Constance and Mrs. Agatha before dinner, at a table in the corner of the drawing-room, and Constance was very busy writing names on a card, and showing them to him for his approval.

Mrs. Forde did not appear; and Constance too well understood her repugnance to meeting any C— people to urge her to join them. She contented herself by giving Edgar directions to drive Mrs. Forde about the park in a low pony carriage after dinner; and Edgar, not a little proud of being trusted with an errand of such importance, very readily consented to the arrangement. All parties were contented, except the Manleys, whose curiosity to see Isabel had been gradually increasing all day, and had now reached such a pitch that they could hardly

refrain from offering to go up into her room and pay their respects to her. They felt that when they returned to C—they should have a very imperfect account to render of the sayings and doings at Leyton, unless they could tell exactly how Mrs. Forde was looking, and with what degree of composure she managed to meet them after all her misdeeds. They had made up their minds too so exactly as to the species of calm compassion with which they had meant to confront her, and the sort of forgiving gentleness with which they intended to demonstrate the Christian state of their own feelings as regarded the past, that their vexation was considerable.

A slight incident occurred to console them in part: Constance proposed that, between dinner and tea, the ladies should take a drive. Mrs. Agatha and Mrs. D'Oyley preferred a stroll in the flower garden, so Constance set off with Mrs. Manley and her two daughters. She chose the most beautiful road in the neighbourhood; took

them to see two ruins and a waterfall, and brought them home through the park, just as the moon was rising and displaying the beautiful avenues to great advantage. As they drove up to the door, the low pony carriage which had just set down Mrs. Forde and Edgar, was driving round to the stables.

Edgar had been met in the hall by a servant from Sir Guy's who brought the Sky terrier which Captain Bohun had promised him. The wicked looking creature was in a basket, and darted out its rough grizzled head, with its fierce red eyes and sharp teeth, to salute its new master by tearing the cuff of his coat, and barking so loud that Edgar could hardly make Mrs. Forde hear his catalogue of the dog's merits. She turned on the staircase to look at this amiable addition to their circle, and whether it was the vice of the little beast, or Edgar's high flown praises, she burst out laughing, just as the Manley party entered the hall. Her mirth was but of short duration, poor

thing! Before she had reached her own part of the house, every trace of merriment had faded from her cheek ; but the Manleys had seen her—seen Mrs. Forde laughing ; the very first time they had encountered her after the shocking events, and so forth ! People who put the kindest construction upon every thing are, I am afraid, very rare ; and when you do find them, I am still more afraid that they generally present a discouraging specimen of that species of sensual indolence of mind, which is naturally distinguished by very complete ignorance, and a large share of passive good-nature.

It is only in books that one finds people composed of all the virtues and none of the faults belonging to two or three classes of character. But to whatever class the Manleys belonged, they set off the next morning with a very high admiration for Leyton, and an exalted opinion of Leyton's mistress. It formed an agreeable and prominent item in their tour ; and

there was a great deal connected with the visit to excite the curiosity and envy of their neighbours. They had seen Mrs. Forde, remember ! and so far were superior to any of the C— people : and the woman, whose surpassing beauty would never have drawn them across their thresholds, became, through her faults, an object of the deepest interest. But far higher, in their catalogue of wonders, stood the astounding fact that they had been under the same roof with Lord Bevis, the recluse, the wizard, the dwarf, the hunchback ; that he had turned out quite delightful and good-looking ; had taken Mrs. Manley in to dinner ; had talked with Miss Harriet, and had asked Miss Louisa for a song !

CHAPTER X.

FER.—Lady, there are as many shades in truth
 As shadows on the ever changing sea,
 Or tints among the evening clouds. The trace
 Of the king's signet on Parmenio's lip,
 Faded as soon as made, but bound him, ay
 To hold his master's secrets undivulged.
 Nor would I wrong the silence of my friend,
 By giving words to his unuttered will ;
 Because he hath not shackled my free speech
 With the coarse links of mutual promises.

ANON.

“ Do you know,” said Constance, one morning, to Lord Bevis as he was looking for a book in the library, “ do you know I think papa has some crotchet in his head about the operation.”

“ I should not wonder, Miss D'Oyley,”

said Lord Bevis, still engaged in his search.

“ There is not the least reason why he should not,” said Constance; “ Mr. A——’s last letter fixed some time about this month.”

“ Ay, indeed,” said Lord Bevis.

“ And what is more,” said Constance, “ if anything is going on, I am sure you are pretty well acquainted with it.”

“ I am the confidant, am I? And can you tell me where you have hid the fourth volume of Milner’s Church History?”

“ Oh! I will find it. All the church books are here, to your left. Now you are not going away; quite the contrary; you are going to tell me all you know about papa’s proceedings?”

“ Oh! that reminds me, Miss D’Oyley, if you wish to see your purple passion-flower blow, this year——”

“ No, I don’t; I care nothing about the purple passion-flower. I want to know papa’s and your secret.”

“ And all this time you are aware Mr. D'Oyley is waiting patiently in his study for this passage which I have come here to look out.”

“ I don't care about that either. I am waiting, but not patiently, for an answer.”

“ Always get your information first-hand, Miss D'Oyley. Suppose you ask your father about his plans.”

“ Now that is so like a man,” said Constance, “ so very stupid ; as if I should have asked you, unless I had my reasons for not asking papa ?”

“ And suppose I have my reasons for not telling tales, if I have any to tell ?”

“ Then I will not speak to you or be friends ever again,” said Constance.

Lord Bevis seemed to hold this threat very light ; he merely smiled, said he was sorry to displease her, and went into her father's study.

Constance kept her word religiously as to not being friends. All the time she

walked with her papa and mamma in the flower garden before luncheon; she replied to Lord Bevis in monosyllables, threw away some flowers he offered her, and declared that she would not ride with him that afternoon.

“What do you mean to do, then, my dear?” asked her father.

“Lord Bevis may ride with Edgar; I shall ride with Hart behind me, like a lady.”

Lord Bevis and Mr. D'Oyley both laughed at this announcement, and the former begged to know if he was in disgrace, and what was his misdemeanour.

“You know very well,” replied Constance, walking on.

“It would be such a relief to me if you would explain,” he said laughing.

“Why, Constance,” said her father, “I thought you never quarrelled with Lord Bevis.”

“Miss D'Oyley has begun to-day for an indefinite period,” said Lord Bevis.

“ He has been teasing me,” returned Constance.

“ Why, what is it all about ?” asked Mr. D'Oyley.

“ Dare I speak, Miss D'Oyley ?” asked Lord Bevis.

“ You will do just as you please,” returned Constance without turning her head.

Lord Bevis did not seem to please, and for a short time there was an interval of peace.

Then Constance said, as if to herself, “ I am going to write to Mary, this evening.”

“ Do you think you could spare half a page or so for me ?” asked Lord Bevis. “ I should very much like to add a few lines.”

“ No,” returned Constance ; “ I have a great deal to say to Mary. I mean to tell her how disagreeable you have become.”

“ I am so glad to hear it,” said Lord Bevis, “ because you may perhaps induce

Miss Hilton to come down here to witness such a phenomenon. It would be well worth the journey."

"It is of no use quarrelling with you, after all," said Constance.

"Are you come to that conclusion?" said Lord Bevis. "Pray shake hands upon it."

Constance consented to this, and moreover, half promised to ride with him that afternoon.

Just as she had rung for the horses, she was detained by the entrance of Lady Bohun with Captain Bohun.

Her Ladyship was quite as voluble as usual. She said Sir Guy had been complaining for some time—her usual phrase to express his being out of health—deplored that she was from home when Constance called last, rallied her upon the attentions of a certain Baronet, and called upon Captain Bohun to say whether or not she was a breaker of hearts.

He said he had no doubt of her power

to do so, but he was not so certain of her will.

Lady Bohun did not know ; but she thought Constance very formidable in that way, though she should say nothing. She hoped she did not mean to exercise her power upon a certain friend of hers ; she should have an opportunity of judging the next day. She hoped Constance did not forget that her archery meeting took place to-morrow.

No. Constance remembered it perfectly ; for the last week she had been practising very successfully.

“ But, good Heaven !” exclaimed Lady Bohun with a start, “ there is your carriage coming up to the door ; I am preventing some of you from going out driving. You mean to ride, I see ; but, Mrs. D'Oyley, I am shocked !”

Mrs. D'Oyley said it was a charity to put off her drive for half an hour, when the sun might have less power.

"True ; what a glorious summer !" exclaimed Lady Bohun.

"Ay, Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis, "you will never have the face to complain of the weather again."

"Yes, I shall, the very next wet day," returned Constance.

They were all ready to start. Isabel who was to go out driving with Mrs. D'Oyley, had glided into the group. Lady Bohun insisted upon seeing them off ; she liked to watch Constance mount her horse. Had she a horse to suit her ? Was that the one Sir Morgan recommended to her ?

"No," Constance said very shortly ; "the horse Sir Morgan advised her to buy had only three legs."

"Oh, you wicked creature !" cried her Ladyship ; "what a libel upon poor Sir Morgan."

"Yes," replied Constance ; "if you take away from him that merit, I really don't know what you leave him."

“ Ah, when young ladies talk in that way,” said Lady Bohun, archly ; “ but what a beautiful hall this is ! I never pass through it but I think what a delightful *bal costumé* you might give ; but then I would confine my costume strictly to one reign. I would not have a medley, like a masquerade.”

Now as Lord Bevis handed Mrs. D'Oyley into the carriage, Captain Bohun could not do less for Mrs. Forde. He did not know what on earth to say to her as they stood on the steps ; so after an embarrassed pause, he turned round and said :

“ Do you find the heat too much for you, Miss Hernshaw ?”

He recollected his mistake immediately, and was annoyed at the blunder.

Isabel replied very quietly, that all weather was alike to her.

He attempted some apology for his awkward mistake—he had forgotten the lapse of time.

“ It was very natural,” said Isabel. “ I

cannot so easily forget all I forfeited with my name."

Any one would have been touched by her manner, it was so sad and quiet. Captain Bohun showed that he was so by the way in which he placed her in the carriage and arranged her cloaks. A great deal can be expressed by trifles !

And so Constance thought, as she stood waiting for her horse to be brought up to the steps. She declined his offered assistance, said her brother was always her page, took the reins from Edgar, and rode off with a smile and a bow, as if she was the happiest person on the face of the earth.

"How glad I am they are all gone," said Edgar, when they were outside the park gates. "How I do hate morning visitors."

"So do I," said Constance.

"What, all morning visitors?" asked Lord Bevis.

"Yes, all," returned Constance. "If people want to see me, I should like them to

come in the evening ; I choose to have the morning to myself."

" There was I waiting and waiting," said Edgar in an injured tone, " and the pony growing so fidgety ; and as for your horse, I should not wonder if he were to throw you over his head. He can't bear standing."

" We must take our chance," said Constance. " Pray do you go to the archery, to-morrow ?"

" Who—I ?" said Lord Bevis. " Pray Miss D'Oyley, what should I do at an archery meeting ?"

" Why, look at the people, and make cynical remarks."

" Very pleasant, I agree with you, for ten minutes ; but I have no mind to play Timon from noon to midnight."

" It is too long, certainly," said Edgar.

" You will not say so when you have on your green doublet and the brown beaver hat with the feathers. I'll let you wear

that on one side," said Constance. "You will find the time only too short!"

Edgar didn't know that he should; and for some little time they rode on in silence.

"After all," exclaimed Constance, pulling up so short as to startle the horses of her two companions, "after all, I know when it is to be."

Lord Bevis looked at her with some little surprise.

"I asked papa to go to H—— with me next week, to choose some books, and he said, 'Not next week, my dear; it won't quite suit me.' I dare say, he has fixed next Monday for Dr. A——."

"Well then, suppose we say Monday," said Lord Bevis. "We don't mean to quarrel any more. Monday is a good day enough; I see no objection to it."

"You might just as well have told me at first," said Constance, "because I don't mean to agitate myself about it. It is a very little thing, and will restore papa to

so many blessings. I am sure I have prayed for it night and day," said she, melting at every word more and more; "and I do not mean to fear it at all."

And then she began to cry in good earnest.

"Now, my dear Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis, "don't you see the wisdom as well as the kindness of your father in trying to conceal the exact time of his trial. But there are five days before Monday: you have no need to think of it yet. Let us have a gallop across the common."

Constance agreed to the gallop; it dispersed her tears and restored her usual spirits, while Edgar puzzled himself, without coming to any exact conclusion, as to what made girls so ready to cry.

CHAPTER XI.

Well decked in a frock of grey,
Hey ho ! grey is greet !
And in a kirtle of green, say
The green is for maidens meet.
A chaplet on her head she wore,
Hey ho ! chaplet
Of sweet violets therein was store,
She sweeter than the violet.

SPENSER.

CLO.—Still I swear I love you.

IMO.—If you but said so, 'twere as deep with me :
If you swear still, your recompense is still
That I regard it not.

CYMBELINE.

“ To be sure, she does look very nice, Mr. D'Oyley,” said Mrs. Agatha, surveying Constance with undisguised admiration ;
“ though if she blushes so deeply at my praise, I really don't know—”

“ I hope it will be a long time before my little girl leaves off blushing,” said Mr. D'Oyley, taking Constance by the hand ; “ but I dare say she looks very well.”

“ You have no idea, papa, what a pretty hat I have on,” said Constance, as she stood with some embarrassment in her archery dress, waiting for the carriage that was to convey her to Lady Bohun's. “ Lord Bevis invented the costume.”

“ Only copied it, Miss D'Oyley,” said Lord Bevis. “ But I am rejoiced to see it turn out so well ; you could not look better.”

“ No, that I could not, if I tried,” said Constance, laughing. “ But come, Edgar, here is my bow for you to carry. Mamma is ready, and the carriage at the door.”

Nothing could exceed Lady Bohun's rapture at the taste Constance had displayed, as much in her costume as in having Edgar as a page to carry her bow. “ Though,” she said, “ you are a tantalising creature to advance your brother to

a post of honour which would make so many people happy."

Constance denied the accuracy of this remark, and inquired after Sir Guy.

"Complaining, as usual," replied Lady Bohun; "but he never interferes with me. He is in the house somewhere, I believe. He fancied there was a cold wind to-day; did you ever hear anything so ridiculous?"

"I shall talk him out of the idea," said Constance. "Whereabouts shall I find him?"

"Oh! that I cannot even imagine. In the drawing-room, perhaps; or shivering in the hot-house, and counting the bunches of grapes; that is one of his favourite morning amusements."

Constance summoned Edgar, and went in search of Sir Guy. To say the truth, one of her reasons for this step was that she had just seen Sir Morgan enter the grounds. One of the gardeners told her that Sir Guy was in the conservatory. She went in, and was not a little embar-

rassed to find him in close conversation with his nephew. It really seemed as if she had been in search of Captain Bohun, she thought ; she felt vexed and angry, and put as much coldness as possible in her reply to his greeting.

Yes, she thanked him, her father was tolerable. Oh, for herself, she was as well as anybody could be this hot weather.

Captain Bohun passed on to speak to Edgar, and Constance began her errand to Sir Guy.

“ I thought you were quite alone, Sir Guy,” she said ; “ and I meant to persuade you that it was a much better thing to come out in the lawn with me and see the shooting ; will you ? The sun is only too hot.”

Sir Guy hesitated ; the wind was north-east, he was sure.

Constance suggested that there was no wind at all.

Well, he did not know. He thought he

would go for a short time. He should like to see Constance shoot.

“ Will you bet upon me, Sir Guy ? ” asked Constance.

Sir Guy laughed, and begged to know whether she was the favourite, and if any body could be found who would take his bet ; and likewise how long it would be before her turn came, because he did not think he could manage to stay long out of doors.

Constance contrived to amuse him and keep him by her side, and Edgar waited on her with bow and quiver, and Captain Bohun was on the other side of her, so that when Sir Morgan came up, he was unable to be very particular in his attentions. In due time she was summoned to the trial ; but it was a matter of such perfect indifference to her that she did not even put forth her usual skill. She let fly her three arrows with as much *sang froid* as if she were shooting at a hedge,

and scarcely looking to see where they lighted, she turned round and went back to Sir Guy.

“ There,” she said, as she left her last arrow quivering in the target a few inches from the bull’s eye, “ you don’t know what you have saved by not betting on my success.”

“ You had a very narrow escape that last time, my dear,” said Sir Guy, raising his glass. “ Bless me ! the wind’s rising.”

“ No, the wind has you in proper consideration ; and a miss is as good as a mile, all the world over. You are richer by a dozen of gloves than you might have been,” said Constance.

“ For my part,” exclaimed Sir Morgan, “ I would rather lose by you, than win by betting on any one else !”

“ Thank you,” said Constance. “ Now step over to Miss Compton, the lady who has won the prize, and say just the same thing ‘ with variations.’ It will answer quite as well. ‘ You would rather have

lost by her success, than won by that of any one else.' "

Sir Morgan avowed he would rather perish than transfer to another the expression of his feelings ; which announcement diverted Constance so highly that she sat down by Sir Guy and laughed without restraint.

Sir Morgan leaning on his bow, whispered to Constance that he feared she had no heart.

" Oh ! yes, I have," said Constance ; " so have you. A horse has a heart. It is a vital organ !"

Sir Morgan, not knowing what to reply to this, stood biting the feathers from one of his arrows, and trying to look dejected.

And now that the shooting was over, the next thing, of course, that people had to do was to eat. Sir Guy rising, and blessing himself that he would soon be under shelter, made a sign to his nephew to take in Constance. " There," he said, " you two

young people find your way in doors together. I will follow you."

"Well," exclaimed Constance, "that is too bad. You are my property altogether this morning. I do think you should give me your arm in to breakfast, should he not?" said she, looking at Captain Bohun.

"Certainly," he said. "He could not think of interfering with his uncle's claims."

Sir Guy was very well pleased at the preference shown him by Constance, who little as she knew it, was quite the lion of the *fête*; so she carried him off in triumph.

The ladies discussed her appearance as she passed; of course she was too dark to please some, and too light to please others. Some thought her spirits forced; others were sure that a town milliner made her kirtle. Some wondered why she shot at all if she could not shoot better; and others could not think how she managed to get those odd white kid hawking gloves.

The elder ladies thought she was a very bad card player, to be so cold and silent

to young Captain Bohun, when it was so very evident that his old uncle was breaking fast, unless indeed she had an eye to the young Lord Alfred G— who was present with his tutor, or the Prince with the impossible name, with whom Lady Bohun was so very, very friendly.

Now Sir Morgan thought naturally that the impression he had already made upon Constance was quite completed by the costume he wore. He thought himself a second and very improved edition of Robin Hood. It was an opportunity not to be lost. She might be able to refuse him, but who could refuse his green and silver doublet, and the long cock's feathers in his hat? So he determined to stand the hazard of the die before they parted that evening. He was unable to obtain a place next to her at the breakfast, and to his great dismay, when as soon as dancing was proposed, he went up to secure her hand, she said she did not mean to dance, and desired Edgar to bring her hat, for she was

going with a party to row on the canal. The party was formed, and there was no room for Sir Morgan in the boat. He would willingly have swamped it, so that he could have secured her ; and he saw Captain Bohun hand her in, and arrange her shawls as he took his place beside her, with feelings so very evil that he fancied them to be sublime.

Sir Morgan's only plan now, was to lay wait for the return of the rowing party, which he did. Constance stepped back to the boat after she had left it, for her shawl. Sir Morgan seized it and begged to be allowed to put it on. She granted this request, but told him to make haste, for the dew was falling, and she wished to go into the house. He wrapped the cachemere round her, and then assured her that the evening air was too soft to be dangerous, and that her life was more precious to him than his own.

Constance replied with a laugh, which

had a little touch of scorn in it, that it was not a question of lives, and hurried after the rest of her party. But Sir Morgan placed himself in her way; it was a narrow path, through a shrubbery, and she could not conveniently proceed.

“Well—now,” she said, looking all astonishment.

Sir Morgan burst all at once into a rhapsody so very unconnected that it would have been difficult to gather from his words alone that he was anxious to obtain her hand. But as he caught hold of it, and pressed it not very gently while he poured out this torrent of nonsense, Constance was able to apprehend his intentions.

In vain she tried to release her hand, or to interrupt his professions. It was only when having called her, for the fourteenth time, an angel, and entreated her to pronounce his doom, declaring at the same time that he felt by the sympathy which existed between them that he could not be

wholly indifferent to her, and talking of awakening the echoes of her heart, that he paused to take breath, and Constance was able to check the abundance of his eloquence.

“ Oh ! for shame, Sir Morgan ! ” she said. “ Is it not unworthy of your birth and condition, to wrong yourself by uttering such falsehoods ? You, who I believe, would disdain to swerve by a hair’s breadth from truth when you address a man, to care nothing about the accuracy of your professions to a woman ! Is it not strange that your honour never suggests to you that truth is more absolutely demanded from the strong to the weak, than between two equal parties ? I would rather lie to my blind father, than tamper as you do, with the blind dependence which a woman too often places on the false words of your sex ! For shame ! Be silent ! You cannot even *feign* to love me ! Let me pass ! ”

And she *did* pass ; leaving Sir Morgan so extremely astonished that he could neither reply nor follow. He contented himself with confounding her “ clear spirit,” and took himself off to his own house.

Her carriage was drawing up as she reached the hall door. Captain Bohun looked earnestly at her as he handed her in ; but he was not very likely to obtain an explanation of her flushed cheek and sparkling eye. They were driving up the avenue, when they saw Lord Bevis hastening towards them. Mrs. D'Oyley uttered an exclamation of terror, and caught her daughter's hand.

“ Oh ! my dear ! your father. Something is the matter. Let me out !” she exclaimed.

Constance stopped the carriage, and opened the door.

“ You frighten us all !” said she, “ quick—what is it ?”

He was the bearer of good news. Mr.

D'Oyley had submitted to the operation in their absence, with every prospect of being restored to the blessing of sight.

CHAPTER XII.

Sol può dir che sia contento
 Chi penò gran tempo in vano
 Dal suo ben chi fu lontano
 E lo tornò a riveder.

METASTASIO.

CH.—Sooner shut

Old Time into a den and stay his motion ;
 Wash off the swift hours from his downy wings,
 Or steal Eternity to stop his glass
 Than shut the sweet Idea I have within me.

* * * * *

One joy shall make us smile, and one grief mourn ;
 One age go with us, and one hour of death
 Shall shut our eyes, and one grave make us happy.

ANG.—And one hand seal the match. I'm your's for
 ever.

THE ELDER BROTHER.

FROM that moment, Constance devoted herself entirely to her father. She was rarely absent from his room. Lord Bevis went to London in a few days ; after being

assured that Mr. D'Oyley was going on perfectly well. Constance wrote the most earnest and pressing invitation to Mary and her uncle to return to Leyton with Lord Bevis ; she said she should be angry with every body, if Mary was not married from her house. Lord Bevis said that if she would join the party, he would do all he could to persuade Miss Hilton to accede to her wishes.

“ I dare say ! ” exclaimed Constance, “ I should like to know who I am to find upon so short a notice ! ”

“ Look about the neighbourhood while I am gone ; far and near,” said Lord Bevis. “ There is Captain Bohun, and Sir Morgan, and Mr. Sedley ;—he is a widower, is not he ? You are fond of the church.”

“ I am not,” said Constance, “ not in particular, I mean ; but I never take advice. So good bye to you.”

For the first few days, Captain Bohun called regularly to inquire after Mr. D'Oyley. On these occasions, he saw Mrs.

D'Oyley and Isabel. Constance was always with her father ; but about the fifth day his inquiries were interrupted by a circumstance which nobody expected to happen so soon. Sir Guy, who had been *complaining* for a short time past, rather more than usual, left off this habit altogether—he died.

Constance heard, among the gossip incidental to a country neighbourhood, that Colonel Bohun had come to take possession, and that Captain Bohun had resigned his commission, and was placed high upon the dowager's books, as one of the matches of the county. She never asked Isabel what had passed during those visits when she was with her father ; but she judged, from Mrs. Forde's amended looks and spirits, that she was well contented with his attentions.

She had a letter from Mary to say that her father and herself would be with them at Leyton, as soon as Mr. D'Oyley was about again. Lord Bevis also assumed, as

he said, the privilege of a relation, and wrote frequent accounts to her of his, and Miss Hilton's proceedings ; and Constance returned the compliment by giving him very circumstantial accounts of her father's progress, and particularly detailing all that he said and thought when he first saw her again. She declared that he thought her grown a little taller, and much prettier ; and that he admired Mrs. Agatha as much as she did herself.

Edgar was returned to school, much to her discomfort : he was a great pet of hers ; and now that she had the power, Mr. D'Oyley was obliged seriously to caution her against gratifying every wish which he formed.

One day, Mrs. D'Oyley and Isabel were taking their accustomed morning drive together, and Constance felt that the fine bright afternoon was hers, to spend or idle, as she liked. She felt quite happy. Her father had been walking a little in the garden, and had been admiring the flowers

and the trees, and the whole scene so much, and had been looking at her tame deer, and her pouter pigeons, and Edgar's fancy rabbits : her own flower-garden, with its old sun dial, had never appeared to her eyes drest in such brilliant colours. She pushed open the little gate that led into the park, and wandered out under the trees.

There are many moments when we would rather be alone, even with our happiness ; silence and solitude are needful to make us enjoy and understand our feelings.

“ How thankful I ought to feel,” she thought, “ for the comforts with which I am surrounded : to see papa restored to sight, and to have the means of doing good to others. No one can tell how disagreeable it is to want money till they have tried it. How very little I ought to regret that Captain Bohun prefers Isabel ! I have no right to expect everything. I have done nothing to deserve a better lot than others, to have exactly my own way. I only wish,

and that is not very unreasonable, that it were all settled, instead of having to wait as long as he must before he proposes for her. Why, he is never coming here with Tim! fishing I suppose? What a stupid boy it is!" she exclaimed, as Tim having thrown open the gate and pointed to Constance, swung it to again and returned towards the house.

She could not do less than come forward to meet him as he advanced.

"I am glad to see you at last," said Captain Bohun; "you have been shutting yourself up for a long time."

"Yes," said Constance, smiling; "papa and I have come out together."

"Need I say how warmly I rejoice with you in Mr. D'Oyley's recovery," said Captain Bohun: "although I expected it, I feel it almost as an agreeable surprise now that it has taken place."

"So do I," said Constance; "but papa saved us a great deal of nervousness. Perhaps you know how he did so?"

"Mrs. D'Oyley told me," returned Captain Bohun.

"Don't you think Isabel has improved wonderfully in all this time?" asked Constance.

"Yes."

"She is as beautiful as ever, now."

"True."

"And do you know she has begun to ride with me? She rides my dark chesnut!"

"Indeed."

"It has done her so much good."

"I dare say—"

"And you know she was always a perfect horsewoman!"

"Was she?"

Constance looked at him a moment with her eyebrows raised, and then walked on.

"But we are going the wrong way," said she.

"Were you not going to the canal?" he asked.

"I believe I was ; at least I may as well."

“ Did you have that old oak felled ?”

“ No. I could not make up my mind to it. Indeed, I half promised Lord Bevis that I would let it stand for him to draw it.”

“ Do you expect him to return to you soon ?”

“ Yes. And Mary and uncle Hilton are to come down to see papa. Lord Bevis is gone to London on business.”

“ So is my father,” said Captain Bohun, “ or he would have accompanied me to-day. I should have had great pleasure in making him known to you.”

“ Oh ! but I have seen Colonel, I mean Sir Reginald Bohun, at uncle Hilton’s. It would have been very needful, I am sure, to present me to him, but I remember him perfectly well : and that reminds me that I have not asked after Lady Bohun.”

“ She is very well.”

“ Now that is not a proper answer, you know,” said Constance, looking up at him.

“ Will you teach me what I ought to say ?” he asked, with a smile, “ because I really believed her Ladyship to be in very good health.”

“ Oh ! you should say : she is getting on a little ; or, I am happy to say, poor thing, she is regaining her spirits by degrees ; or, I do not think she is quite so low as she was last week ! But to talk of being very well, it will not do at all.”

“ She has a very good jointure,” said Captain Bohun, quietly ; “ I am not at all aware of anything that should make her ill.”

“ Now I will tell you of a very great fault of your's,” said Constance. “ When you dislike persons, you really do despise them so much !”

“ You have the advantage of me,” said he, “ I do not know any fault that you have, which I could tell you of in return.”

Constance was rather embarrassed by this remark. She began throwing pebbles

in the water to startle the fish, and she pointed out several fine trout as they darted about the stream.

"I wonder what Edgar would say to me," she exclaimed, "for disturbing his fish? He looks on them all as his particular property, made on purpose for him to catch."

"Is he as fond of angling as he was?"

"Not quite. He has taken it into his head now, that he wants to be a soldier. So like a silly boy!"

"You do not mean to give your consent then?"

"No. I shall not send him among a parcel of people with more leisure than learning, and more money than wit. Oh! dear, what a blunder I have made; I ought to beg your pardon."

"I am not one of them, now," said Captain Bohun, smiling.

"Oh! I had forgotten; Isabel told me you had left the army. I congratulate you. You are a gentleman at large, ready to be

Prime Minister, as Lady Alton would say, on the first opportunity."

"I am not quite so ambitious," said Captain Bohun.

"Perhaps, on the whole that is as well," said Constance, archly. "Premierships don't fall vacant every day."

"At least, my ambition is of a different nature," he said, with some agitation, "though it may be as impossible to attain."

Constance, who immediately thought of Isabel, turned very pale and dizzy for a moment; but so completely were her thoughts engrossed by the supposed allusion that it never occurred to her to conceal them.

"I don't think so at all," said she; "I am almost sure it is not impossible; although, how much would have been saved if you had thought as you do now, when I first knew you. And though you cannot talk about it for a long time to come, yet it must be a great pleasure to know that you are not at all forgotten."

It would not be easy to describe the ex-

treme astonishment depicted on her companion's features while she spoke, but she did not observe it ; she was gazing down into the water as it glided past her feet.

“ Indeed,” she continued, “ I cannot but feel great satisfaction when I think how much more worthily Isabel will bestow her regard a second time, if—that is—if my conjectures are right.”

“ Isabel !” he exclaimed, stepping back a pace.

Constance for the first time raised her eyes, and met his look of undiminished wonder.

“ Mrs. Forde !” he repeated.

Constance coloured very highly, and looked very frightened.

“ I am sure, I hope I have said nothing. I understood—indeed,” said she, almost ready to cry, “ I am afraid I did not understand—”

“ I fear not,” he said. “ I might, indeed, think that you would receive my homage with coldness, but I had not anticipated that

you would have ascribed my devotions to —Mrs. Forde !”

She had never heard him speak so haughtily before ; she wrapped her scarf round her, and walked on in offended silence.

“ We have both been making mistakes,” he said, after a pause. “ Your’s is very trifling and very easily explained. I have a very cordial aversion to Mrs. Forde ; it would be a satisfaction to me never to see her again. My error is destined to embitter my whole life.”

Constance stopped, and listened with eyes dilated and lips apart ; but still silent.

“ I have never ceased to love you,” he continued, “ and I had hoped, that when your father regained his sight, one obstacle to my success might have been removed. I had even ventured to think sometimes that you had understood my silence ;—I am undeceived.”

Constance walked on again, her heart beating fast ; but proudly and silently.

“For that matter,” she thought, “he does not understand *me*! I have as great a right to be angry as he has;—if he chooses to give me up for a mistake, it is very well.”

And yet to find that he had remained true to the impression she had made upon him, that all this while she had bewildered herself in assigning his regard to the wrong person, afforded her so much delight, that her anger fast disappeared. Still it was not for her to say so; surely not for her to explain, until she was asked for an explanation.

They walked on silently until they reached the little garden gate. He stepped forward and endeavoured to open it for her; but there was something peculiar in the latch, and he could not get it undone.

“Oh! you know nothing about it,” said Constance. “Let me come; I will show you how to unfasten it.”

She opened the latch, and stood with the gate in her hand.

“But this is not the shortest way,” said she, “all through the shrubberies. If you take the path across the green, it will save you, I should think, a quarter of a mile, if you are in such a hurry to get home.”

He had not shown any particular hurry to get home; and he could not suppress a smile.

“I wish you would show me something I am much more anxious to know—something of your heart;” he said.

“I don’t—I cannot tell—” stammered Constance. “I thought—I took it into my head—I made a mistake—”

“You thought I preferred that disastrous woman to yourself,” said he, very gently. “Could you wrong me so much?”

“And when you went to Southampton?” said she, smiling, yet fixing her eyes on the ground.

“I thought it just possible that two ladies not very much used to travelling might meet with some trifling impediment,

and so I preferred being at hand in case of accidents."

Constance raised her eyes to his face, and then dropped them again.

"And is that all that stands between us, dearest?" he whispered.

Constance did not say, no.

They had a great deal to explain to each other. In the first place they had to say it all over again two or three times: a practice peculiar, I should suppose, to lovers and persons of a very advanced age.

However, when it was all said, Constance looked at her watch and found it wanted about two minutes to dinner time.

"How comes it to be so late?" said she; "it is all your fault. Do you know, as Sir Reginald is in town, I think you had better stay to dinner."

Her companion accepted this invitation with great alacrity; and hinted that the absence of Sir Reginald would have made no difference in his readiness to do so.

“Don’t be wicked,” said Constance ; “because I should have certainly sent you off, had your father been at home. Are you come after me, my dear Mrs. Agatha ? I have been wasting my time at such a shocking rate, this fine day, that I am not dressed for dinner ; but I dare say you will excuse it.”

“Why, my dear, it would be a strange waste of time indeed to dress for an old woman,” said Mrs. Agatha ; “but your papa could not think what had become of you, so I offered my services to find you out.”

Constance felt a slight pang when she thought of Isabel ; but she hoped that, as she had misinterpreted Captain Bohun’s feelings, she might also have mistaken those which she had attributed to her.

They entered the house through the conservatory. Mrs. Agatha went first, and Constance lingered a moment behind.

“It is all very well,” said she, looking up to Captain Bohun, and trying to laugh

while she blushed deeper and deeper ; “ but what am I to say to papa ? ”

“ I don't think he will be very much surprised,” said Captain Bohun, smiling.

“ Oh ! you have been beforehand with me ; very well,” said she, as they went in.

Mrs. Forde was in the drawing-room with Mrs. D'Oyley. She saw Captain Bohun shake hands with Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyley ; but she did not detect a more than usual warmth in his manner, and it never had occurred to her as a possible thing that he should become attached to Constance.

She was quite puzzled therefore to see him draw his chair close to her's in the evening, just as Lord Bevis used to do, and offer to help her in the manufacture of the tea and coffee.

Still more was she surprised to see that Constance, though occasionally lively in her replies, for the most part sat silent, blushing and smiling at his half whispered

remarks, and making some slight pretence of netting meanwhile.

“And who is that purse for at last, my dear?” asked Mrs. Agatha.

Captain Bohun whispered something, and Constance laughed.

“I must finish it a little better than I have begun, or it will be fit for nobody,” said she. “Just look at this last row; that is because you were talking to me!”

“You half promised it to Lord Bevis,” said her father.

“I have changed my mind,” said Constance. “It is not good enough for him. You may take out those few last stitches, while I sing you a song.”

Mrs. Agatha relieved Captain Bohun of his task, at which he did not seem to be very expert, and he followed Constance to the piano.

“I am going to sing something very pretty, but rather old,” said she; “one of Mary’s favourites; no, I think, Isabel, you used to like it.

She heard a rustle—a slight sigh—she sprang from the piano, but not in time to save Isabel from falling. She sank from her chair upon the ground.

CHAPTER XIII.

Thus even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips.

KING LEAR.

The end crowns all ;
And that old common arbitrator Time
Will one day end it.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

So he has thrived
That he is promised to be wived
To fair Marina.

PERICLES.

“ I DID not think, young ladies,” said Mrs. D'Oyley, looking round the circle, “ that I had been half so important a person.”

Mary had just arrived with her father and Lord Bevis ; and it chanced that Lord Bevis was beside her on the sofa, and

Captain Bohun leaning on the priedieu chair in which Constance was seated.

Mr. Hilton laughed, and said that few young ladies would have put off certain arrangements for the same reason ; but his Mary was a very decided little body.

He looked so very proudly at his Mary while he spoke, that Constance was quite surprised. She did not yet know that people generally see with other people's eyes.

Captain Bohun whispered to Constance, that Miss Hilton was not the only person who had kept other people in suspense until her father's recovery was decided.

Constance replied that he knew nothing about her motives ; perhaps she had a great many other reasons, and perhaps he would go and look out of the window to see if Mrs. Agatha was coming.

Then when Mrs. Agatha came, she made Captain Bohun take her in to dinner, and sat quite on the other side of the table, by

Sir Reginald, and pretended not to hear when Captain Bohun asked her to take wine, (for in those days people took wine with one another); and tried to teaze him, but without success, in a great many other little ways.

Mary, who sat grave, calm, and silent, could scarcely imagine how Constance could jest so gaily when she was happy. She could laugh off disagreeable things, but there was a depth of repose in her content, which was utterly distinct from mirth.

But then there was a thousand fold more sentiment in Mary than in Constance, though nobody could be made to believe so, by reason of all those heavy curls that Constance wore, dropping low down, and breaking here and there into bright tendrils which rested on her neck.

After dinner, Mary and Constance went out walking together in the park, and took that opportunity to tell each other all that

had happened since they parted. They were not allowed to enjoy their *tête-à-tête* very long, for before they had quite exhausted their several subjects, they were joined by their respective lovers.

Mary stretched out her hand to Lord Bevis when she saw him, and finished what she was saying to her cousin ; but Constance told Captain Bohun that she wished him farther, and that she was talking secrets, and that it was very ill-mannered of him to interrupt her, and that she should tell Sir Reginald ; and that Sir Reginald always took her part ; which was true enough.

Constance was as much amused with Sir Reginald, as she had been with Sir Guy. He was a great fidget ; and like many elderly men, fond of the society of young ladies. Constance and Mary were very frequently with him.

He was almost a stranger to his home ; for he had scarcely ever left his regiment for a week together, under the impression,

as Mary used to say, that it would melt away like Alladin's palace, if he was not continually looking at it.

In the morning, he used to come bustling down to Leyton to know if they were going to ride ; and when they had ridden, he was anxious to know what they were going to do with themselves until luncheon ; and directly luncheon was over, he was in a hurry for them to come and see his improvements ; and he would walk them remorselessly about his plantations until dinner time.

Constance said to him one day, that as she must have two fathers now, she would rather have him than any body else :—a remark which he repeated to every one far and near, in the belief that it was singularly witty.

He was very happy digging and planting trees, under the idea that they would grow much better than those planted by any body else ; and he liked to have Constance and Mary standing by him all the time

talking to him. Captain Bohun took leave to add himself to the party whenever he could ; and sometimes when Sir Reginald was very busily engaged, he stole Constance away into the shrubberies ; and then nobody could be quite sure when they would be visible again.

And now Isabel felt, with terrible force, all that she had inflicted upon others, in her heedless and unprincipled career. Unused to suppress her feelings, and, indeed, unacquainted with the controlling power which thought can exercise over emotion, she knew no better than to conceal her sufferings ; she had no means of diminishing them. She returned to her first love with an abandonment that surprised herself, and would still more have astonished Constance, who could not comprehend a woman loving where her affection was unsought.

It was misery to her to be present when Constance and Captain Bohun were together. Yet she could not bear to be

absent, picturing to herself all, and more than all, the regard expressed in their manner to each other. She tormented herself by joining their parties incessantly and witnessing the content she could no longer interrupt. Her pride might be hurt by seeing that Lord Bevis had transferred his regard to another ; but her heart was crushed by the defection of Captain Bohun. She was constantly in company with two men who had been her devoted slaves, but who had receded from her unworthiness, and now paid to character, the homage they had once offered to beauty.

True ; she had thrown them off in the first instance ; but they had shown no disposition to return to her feet. Lord Bevis had always treated her with a calm kindness, which showed more fully than a more distant manner, that the past had left no trace of regret or anger on his mind. The coldness of Captain Bohun she had ascribed to pique, and had thought it might be vanquished by time ; but now that he had

secured the hand of Constance, nothing could be more gentle and considerate than his behaviour towards her. She could not disguise from herself the mortifying conclusion that he had regarded her with such strong symptoms of dislike, because he looked upon her as dangerous to the peace of Constance, rather than because he could not forgive her fickle treatment of himself.

Mrs. Agatha was very frequently with her, and Isabel would often spend hours at her cottage, and would startle the kind old lady not a little by frequent and prolonged bursts of hysterical tears, or by equally distressing fits of excited gaiety. The only thing that gave tranquillity to her excited feelings was the luxury of riding. An accomplished horsewoman, she who was so timid in most cases, never knew fear on horseback. No animal was too fleet or too wild for her to manage. She would outstrip all her companions, and take a road that would lead her farther

than they were likely to go, and come home almost as soon as they could, with her horse in a condition that would make the grooms look grave, but without appearing in the slightest degree fatigued by her exertions. Constance never suffered a word of remonstrance to be addressed to her for these fancies ; she would rather that every horse in the stable were spoilt, than that Isabel should be deprived of a pleasure that seemed to do her so much good, so long as there was no danger to herself in the practice.

One sunny morning, early in September, a very few mornings before that which was to witness the transfer of Mary and Constance to their respective masters, they were all to go out on one of their long exploring rides, a sort of roving expedition, in which they got entangled among narrow lanes and thick hedgerows, where none of them knew the way forward nor the way back, and they were obliged to trust to

the chance of meeting some shepherd or equally rustic person, to enable them ever to reach their home again.

Now Constance, on this occasion, tried very hard to persuade Lord Bevis and Captain Bohun to go out shooting ; and when they persisted in declining this pastime, she used all her endeavours to coax Sir Reginald to ride with them. But Sir Reginald said it was quite out of the question, because he had a great deal to do that morning, and had only just time enough at his disposal to come over and ask how they all were ; and he hinted into the bargain that Constance did not really wish for his company, but that she was a little coquette, and liked to make Reginald feel himself of no importance to her.

So the ladies went up to dress, and the gentlemen waited their pleasure below. At last Constance came down in a great hurry.

“ You who make a merit of dressing so quickly,” said Captain Bohun, “ do you

know how long you have been absent? I was half afraid you meant to disappoint me."

"Why, that I might very likely have done," said Constance, "but I could not bear, as Tony Lumpkin says, to disappoint myself. I am so fond of riding. But the fact is this, Lord Bevis, Grey Chepstow is lame."

"Wonderful, is it not?" said Lord Bevis to Captain Bohun.

"Very," he replied. "I am only astonished that she has not lamed every horse in your stable."

"That is just like your ill-nature," said Constance. "Isabel knows how to ride."

"More shame for her, then," said Captain Bohun, "for bringing in her horses in such a condition."

"It is very barbarous, you know, Miss D'Oyley," said Lord Bevis. "Observe the way Miss Hilton rides."

"Well," said Constance, "I did not think you were going to be disagreeable

this morning ; I thought you would have offered Isabel your gentle horse, the Arab with the beautiful little head."

" I shall be only too happy," said Lord Bevis, " if Mrs. Forde is not afraid for herself. The creature is perfectly quiet ; only, for her own sake as well as for mine, she must not dash off at her usual rate, for these Arabs, so quiet at a moderate pace, are apt to warm to their work, and become frantic if you gallop them hard."

" You do very often," said Constance.

" Very true," said Lord Bevis ; " but I flatter myself I have rather a better hand on my rein than Mrs. Forde."

" Well, she will not want to go fast this time," said Constance. " But riding is so essential to her, that I do not like her to miss a day if I can help it."

There was a crystal clearness in the air, and a gentle wind just ruffled the deep green leaves on the trees. The horses tossed their heads and pawed the ground, impatient to be off,

“Recollect, Mrs. Forde, I entreat you,” said Lord Bevis, “that you do not press your horse forward. I am willing to admit that you need no caution with an English horse, but you are not used to these Arabs.”

“He seems perfectly quiet,” said Mrs. Forde, stroking the arched neck of the slender creature as he stood wavering at the steps. “I have no fear of anything but vice. I dare say he does not kick.”

“I do not think he knows how,” said Lord Bevis as he arranged her habit. “Now, Miss Hilton, I am at your service.”

“Do you know this road, Sir?” asked Constance.

“Why will you call me, ‘Sir?’ Yes, that turning will take you to H——”

“It will, indeed, if you follow it,” said Constance; “it takes you a complete circuit from Leyton all round to the other side of H——. Don’t you remember that expedition of ours, when we were all taken

very hungry, and stopped to buy cakes at a cottage ?”

“ You and Miss Hilton were reduced to eat those cakes. I don't think we came in for a share.”

“ Oh, true ! you men are never hungry. Is that heath like Scotland ? You know I have never travelled anywhere.”

“ The heath may be, but not the surrounding country. I am sure you will be pleased with the Trosachs.”

“ No doubt I shall. Do you like Scotch songs ?”

“ When you sing ' them, I do very much.”

“ How kind you are this morning. Will you gather me that branch of honeysuckle ? How late it blows. Thank you. Why cannot I make my horse go close to the side of the hedge when I wish to gather anything ?”

“ I cannot tell. It may be the fault of your horse ; it may be—”

“ My fault, I suppose. Now, am I holding my reins properly ? ”

“ Rather too short. Does it not tire you to stretch out your hand so far ? ”

“ Yes, but if he should stumble ? ”

“ Never ride him again, then ; he has no business to stumble. ”

“ Will you hold my reins while I make up this honeysuckle into a nosegay ? ”

“ With pleasure. ”

“ Do you love flowers ? ”

“ Yes, I have a great fondness for them. ”

“ I will let you have this beautiful piece of honeysuckle to wear in your coat. ”

“ Thank you ; perhaps you will put it in for me, as I cannot let go your bridle. ”

Constance leaned from her saddle, and fastened the flower in his dress. At that moment, Mrs. Forde's horse dashed past them at full speed, with red nostril widely dilated, and eyes rolling. Mary always thought that, while engaged in watching

Constance and Captain Bohun, she had forgotten the advice of Lord Bevis, and had struck her horse impatiently ; but that they never knew.

Constance snatched her bridle, and urged him by signs to make haste.

“ Follow her ! forward ! quick ! ” she cried, waving her hand. “ She cannot be thrown—she will not be hurt ? ” she exclaimed, looking eagerly in his face.

“ No, no ; I hope not ; I'll see. Wait for me,” he said, as he set spurs to his horse.

He was not swift enough. She kept him in sight too long ; the lane turned abruptly into the high road, and then she could see neither him nor Isabel. Lord Bevis and Mary were far on in front. She had dropped her whip, and though she tried to urge her horse forward, she fancied she made but little progress. She gained the high road, as I said, on the sudden ; Captain Bohun was riding fast towards her.

“ Keep back, for Heaven's sake ! ” he

exclaimed. "You can do no good ; it is no sight for you ; keep back."

He caught at her bridle as he spoke, but she slipped from her horse, and ran forward. A heap of dark clothes lay on the road, and close beside, the Arab was feeding quietly from the scanty patches of grass that grew on the wayside.

Lord Bevis was supporting the head—a dark streak on the forehead and a broken branch near, from an overhanging tree, told the story.

Constance snatched the form of Isabel to her bosom, and pressed the cold cheek to hers. She looked with all the hopeless horror of conviction upon the half-closed glazing eye, and pale, parted lips. A few short, thick sobs ensued, then a deep silence, a sigh or two, and among them one word breathed—"Reginald."

The next moment she was a corpse.

CHAPTER XIV.

Sweet rose, fair flower, untimely plucked, soon faded !
 Plucked in the bud, and faded in the spring !
 Bright orient pearl, alack ! too timely shaded !
 Fair creature killed too soon by death's sharp sting.

* * * *

Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good ;
 A shining gloss that fadeth suddenly :
 A flower that dies when first it 'gins to bud ;
 A brittle glass that's broken presently :
 A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower,
 Lost, faded, broken, dead within an hour.

SHAKESPEARE.

Pain and grief

Are transitory things, no less than joy ;
 And though they leave us not the men we were,
 Still, they do leave us.

TAYLOR.

So Leyton was changed in a few hours
 into a house of mourning. · There is some-
 thing in extreme beauty, which, as we

rarely encounter it, so we pardon to its influence a thousand faults which we register exactly against those who are ungifted with this all-powerful charm. This is an injustice; but the even-handed goddess has very few followers in this world, and most people spend their whole lives in giving and receiving wrongs of such intangible nature. There was not a person in the whole house, who did not sincerely grieve for Isabel. The maids wept like river gods. The men looked sulky, which is English for sorry in that sex. The house was darkened, the beautiful corpse laid out; people stole along with that awe in their footsteps which death ever inspires. Constance was in her own boudoir really ill, Mrs. D'Oyley sitting with her, Mrs. Agatha down stairs making tea, Mary and Lord Bevis were sad and silent. Captain Bohun had gone home, and had then come back again with Sir Reginald, who could not possibly rest without hearing the whole account from Mary.

He had a great deal to say about its being a horrible occurrence, and a very remarkable fact, mingled with some confused remarks respecting Providence, which tended to say, as nearly as Mary could judge, that, as Providence had seen fit to remove Mrs. Forde, nobody ought to be at all more sorry about it than they could possibly help.

A convenient doctrine is this, and very commonly in people's mouths when the subject under consideration does not immediately affect them, and when they have a very great personal dislike to dejected faces; so Sir Reginald stirred his tea, and thought that in this instance Providence knew best. But conversation lagged, the shadow was upon them all; nobody attempted to break the heavy silence, until Miss D'Oyley's maid whispered to Captain Bohun that her mistress would be glad to see him.

Constance had persuaded her mother to go to bed, and was alone when he came in.

“ I am so glad you are come,” she said. “ Papa, I know, will be up presently ; now be quick and take me to see Isabel.”

He endeavoured to convince her that it would be unwise, unfit, in her agitated state ; that Mr. D'Oyley would disapprove it, and Mrs. D'Oyley throw the blame on him for yielding to her fancies. But she got up and looked for a shawl, and said she had made up her mind.

“ I should not like to go alone,” she said, “ and I know you will not refuse me. It all seems now like some uneasy dream ; and unless I see her again I shall never believe it. I shall always be oppressed with a restless doubt of her being really gone. Only let us make haste before papa comes.”

She was hardly able to walk, and he almost carried her to the door of the chamber. They entered. The first thing that met her eyes was Isabel's favourite marble basin heaped with the flowers she had gathered that very morning, in her

health and strength. She was glad of the respite—the moment's pause which the sight afforded her. Captain Bohun uncovered the face, and turned aside with an agitation he could not repress from the silent features. Constance sank on her knees. It was the first time she had ever looked upon the dead. How awful ! how unimaginable ! How many fearful dreams, how many fever fits had shadowed to her ghastly shapes that she thought dead, but all unlike the truth. She could not breathe as she looked upon it. She had heard death called beautiful. Yes—that calm heavy brow, and the white full eyelid, with the long curved lash that cast a black, fixed shadow on the cheek, these, even in their solemn stillness might be beautiful ; but the mouth—the lips were contracted, like withered rose leaves, and the white teeth, locked together, lay in sight. And no breath might ever more pass those portals—no sound uplift the curtain of that eye—no motion stir the rigid composure of those limbs !

She had heard death compared to sleep ; madness were as like to reason ! Had that thing ever lived, ever moved ? Was that shape all of Isabel that could die ? It looked smaller, finer. She would not touch it, would not kiss it, as Captain Bohun signed for her to do when he raised her up ; she shrank from the thought. Everything sickened her. The scent of the flowers was wafted to where she stood, and a fly hovered and settled [on the bright hair. Her companion waved it off, and it settled again, and the stillness of the white face was more shocking than before. She burst into a shriek and fainted.

Mrs. Agatha [passed the night with her at her earnest entreaty ; and they both slept little and by snatches. The weary night ; the long sickly shadows of the lamp ; the fevered wakefulness ; the busy thought that would repeat the scenes of the day, or the short slumber that obliterated them and made the waking painful : who has not spent such nights ?

Mr. D'Oyley wrote to Lady Hernshaw the day after this fatal occurrence, and he never looked for any answer to his communication. He thought, in common with all the other friends of this lady, that she had entirely hardened her heart against her unhappy daughter; and that news of whatever kind that related to her, would be received with an equal degree of unconcern.

Three days afterwards the whole party were in the drawing-room, when Sir Reginald, who was standing at one of the windows, and wishing very much that it might be proper to tell the girls to come and play at bagatelle, and not distress themselves any longer about what could not be helped, startled them all, by calling out :

“ Why, Constance, my love, here comes that extraordinary woman at last.”

“ Lady Hernshaw ?” said Constance, rising from her chair, and sinking down again as pale as death.

“ The very same ; and post haste, if one

may judge by her horses. I wonder what brings her here?"

"Shall I ring?" said Mary, "the servants have orders to admit no one."

Mr. D'Oyley went to receive Lady Hershaw just as she was rushing up the hall steps. Her appearance was that of a distracted person; her hair neglected, her eyes wild, her cheeks pale and sunken. She caught hold of both his hands, and hurried with him into the house.

"Good God! Mr. D'Oyley," she exclaimed, "is this true?—this awful, shocking event! It cannot be. You meant to alarm me,—to awaken my feelings,—to induce me to receive her at last. I will indeed! I'll take her home with me now. I came here on purpose!"

Mr. D'Oyley in vain attempted to explain;—to interrupt her.

"But she is seriously hurt!" she continued, "something has happened. I can't describe what I felt on receiving your letter. It was terrible!—beyond all words. Let

me see her!—Let me see my child! No, no!—don't say it!—She is so young to die! She cannot—cannot—”

It was a relief to Mr. D'Oyley that she burst into an hysterical fit of weeping. He said all he could to soothe her; but how console a woman who had acted such a part! She changed at once into a storm of the most passionate upbraidings against herself. All the errors of her beloved daughter might be traced to her own mismanagement. She had been the wretched cause of all; and in resenting Isabel's faults, she had but resented her own guilty work. And then she burst into another bitter flood of tears, clasped her hands, called herself the most miserable of mothers, and entreated Mr. D'Oyley to lead her directly to the remains of her poor child.

Then followed a scene of frantic excitement. She fell over the threshold in a paroxysm of hysterics, and it was some time before she was able to proceed. She

uttered the most earnest appeals to Heaven, threw herself upon the coffin, called to her dear child, her beloved Isabel; entreated her forgiveness, and in the same breath upbraided her own cruelty. In fact, she underwent all the agonies of an awakened remorse. It was a shocking scene!—terrible as being the display of a grief for which there was no remedy, and shocking as a contrast between her frenzied adjurations and the awful stillness of the insensible image before her. Mr. D'Oyley was truly glad when she suffered herself to be led from the room. She insisted on removing the body of her daughter to her own home, that it might be interred in the family vault; and her servants immediately proceeded to H— to give the needful directions. In the meantime she declined seeing any member of the family except Mr. D'Oyley, whom she requested to read to her out of the Bible, and then remained in a room by herself with a very large

prayer-book, which she did not read, laid open on a table with a pair of waxlights, which she imagined, in common with many coarse-minded people, possessed some peculiar charm in time of sorrow. Singular, that in health and quiet, these people never have recourse to these good books, and that in sorrow or sickness they attach so much importance to the mere volume, as if the age of spells and talismans were not past !

In the mean time Mr. D'Oyley returned to the drawing-room, and mentioned that Lady Hernshaw wished to be alone, which Constance was rejoiced to hear, for she had a very great dread of encountering her Ladyship ; and likewise that she intended removing her daughter, which news cost Constance some tears, while Sir Reginald could not conceal his satisfaction. It was highly proper ; very good taste on the part of Lady Hernshaw, and so on.

The next morning, Constance was

awakened by a stir in the house, which convinced her that they were removing her poor friend. She went to her window which looked into the court-yard, and there was the hearse standing just beneath, and Lady Hernshaw's carriage in waiting behind.

The grey dawn was stealing in thin lines along the horizon ; it had rained in the night, and every thing looked cold and cheerless. It was better than sunshine ; it was in harmony with the dreary journey on which they were going,—the mother and daughter !

Mr. D'Oyley and Lord Bevis came and stood at the door, while the coffin was carried to the hearse ; and then Mr. D'Oyley went in and returned with Lady Hernshaw weeping and hanging on his arm. Her head was stooped, so that Constance did not see her features. She clasped her hands together in answer to some remark of Mr. D'Oyley's, and then turned and

gave her hand to Lord Bevis, while she seemed trying to speak ; but her voice was choked, and throwing herself into a corner of her carriage, the dreary, slow procession began.

* * * *

And Lady Hernshaw, after a proper pause given to her unexampled griefs, as she called them, mingled in the world again as freely as before ; but she had grown many years older in a short space of time. Her health had received a shock, as well as her appearance. It was not so easy as it used to be to manage her hair, and to paint down her wrinkles ; her voice was altered, and everything became a fatigue to her. Every body, except herself, ascribed these changes to the awful death of Mrs. Forde ; but she went from one doctor, and from one *system* to another, and wondered that nothing could bring her back to what she was before. She had bought experience too, at the usual

price ; at the price of much sharp suffering, much regret, much shame, and much of that physical wear and unrest, which ever keeps pace with the education of the soul. She had gained experience too, at the usual time :—when it could not be of the slightest use to her, or any other human being. All she had learned from her great trial was,—how falsely she had brought up her child, and how wickedly she had resented her own work !

And she had no other daughter !

CHAPTER XV.

Sorrows are changed to bride-songs—so they thrive,
Whom fate in spite of storms hath kept alive.

FORD.

All prepare
For revels and disport: the joys of Hymen
Like Phœbus in his lustre, put to flight
All mists of dulness, crown the hours with gladness;
No sounds, but music; no discourse, but mirth.

IBID.

Yet men who give
A living daughter to the fickle will
Of a capricious bridegroom, laugh—the madmen!
Laugh at the jocund bridal feast, and weep
When the fair corse is laid in blessed rest,
Deep, deep, in mother earth.

MISS MITFORD.

THE marriages were delayed for six weeks, during which time Constance wore mourning for her friend. No arguments or persuasion could induce her to shorten

this period ; and it was so entirely understood that Mary could not possibly be married at any other time than that appointed for the wedding of Constance, that Mr. Hilton was obliged to go back to town, and return within a few days of the appointed time. So much for sentiment ! as he observed to his daughter. It invariably put people to great inconvenience. Sir Reginald was still more dismayed. Why in six weeks' time he had hoped that they would have returned from their tour, and quietly settled at Leyton, with a whole round of dinner parties and balls. Why it would be quite autumn in six weeks ; and, bless his soul ! she could never think of going to the Highlands of Scotland in cold weather ! She did not at all know what she was about. And there was her poor father all impatience to return to his living, and waiting solely for her marriage. It was really out of the question !

Constance heard him through very quiet-

ly; and then told him that he was the dearest father in the world, except her real father; but that all that was quite settled, and could not be changed, and that Mr. Bohun was quite of her way of thinking; (here she made several signs aside to Mr. Bohun, which seemed to imply that he had better not contradict her); and that really it was rather too bad of the spectators to be in such a hurry, when the principals were taking it so very amiably and quietly.

So all that Sir Reginald was able to achieve by his eloquence, was, that the six weeks should date from the day of the accident; and as soon as that was distinctly understood and agreed upon, he became more comfortable. He did not know but that she might have chosen to count from the day of the funeral. However, there was one comfort,—it was impossible to say how many things there were to be done and settled beforehand. The more time there was, the more there seemed

to be done. As the day drew near, both houses were filled with guests. There were two sets of bridesmaids, with fathers and mothers in proportion, and these were coming and going from one house to another all day long; and sight-seeing and dinner-parties kept all gay and employed. Then Mr. Eustace Hilton came down with his father; and it is indeed untold what an addition he was to the party. Perhaps the marriage of Constance would not have been of sufficient interest to entice him to Leyton; but his sister was going to make a very good connexion; quite to give him a lift, making him brother-in-law to an Earl, and he thought it quite needful to grace the ceremony with his presence.

He was very useful, driving or riding with the six bridesmaids, and Lord Bevis was exceedingly entertained with him. He had never chanced to come in contact with a very common mind before;—he had scarcely exchanged three sentences with Sir Morgan, during that gentleman's as-

siduities ; and as every thing in society wore to him the gloss of novelty, he was much amused by hearing Eustace talk. Not having been ever possessed of an idea of his own, he was an excellent standard of the way in which most men think, speak, and feel ; because it would have been impossible for him to perform these transactions in a way at all different from his neighbours. Thus, he thought his sister's match a very good thing, and Mrs. Forde's death a shocking affair, and a bore besides. He thought Constance looked remarkably pretty in black, and Miss Blackwood, the handsomest of the bride-maids, was a splendid woman ;—and this exactly because other people said and thought so likewise. He would be sorry if his best pointer died, and glad if any horse won which he betted upon ; and without distinctly knowing it himself, he was very fond of his sister. Then, he spoke indistinctly, and dropped his R's, and used an artificial tone of voice,—infallible

signs of a want of education, and of a person not reading enough to be fluently supplied with words ;—a state of darkness which he enjoyed in common with all the men of his intimate acquaintance.

Constance did not wonder that Mr. Bohun had taken the first opportunity to be rid of them ; but she was exceedingly glad to have Eustace in the house. He took some trouble off her hands, and the six bridesmaids were much happier ; even the handsome Miss Blackwood brightened up when he came dawdling into the room, and sang her best while he turned over the wrong leaves in her music-book. Indeed, it was plain to Constance that she would have been very willing to resign her approaching duties to any one who wished for them, and take her place among the brides, for the sake of Mr. Eustace Hilton. It was all quite right ; he could give her what she wished for—a carriage very properly built, a great deal of company, and an account *ad libitum* at Howell and James's. As for

hearts, they were very well for people who required such things, she would much rather have an opera-box.

“ Yes,” said Constance to her cousin Mary, as the elegant Miss Blackwood was exhibiting to Eustace some of the gold and ivory trifles of her workbox, “ if poor Isabel had been as vulgar and as unfeeling as many girls, she would have accepted, without a sigh, the position her mother had provided for her. She was not bad enough, that was her fault !”

“ Yes,” said Mary, smiling, “ next to being good enough, to be bad enough is the best way to ensure the good opinion of the world.”

“ I think they had better marry,” said Constance ; “ it would cause such a sensation, would not it ?”

“ I have no objection, I am sure,” said Mary. “ Eustace has a right to expect a handsome wife for his money ; and this is a match that people would not laugh at ; far better than little Miss Meredith.”

“ Could we not manage it ? ” asked Constance eagerly.

“ Oh, it will manage itself,” returned Mary, carelessly. “ I heard the lady just now quoting Byron in support of a compliment she had just been paying to his eyes. You need not open yours, my dear Constance, such things are done now-a-days, and Eustace never could resist a little flattery. I dare say he begins to fancy himself deeply attached.”

“ But I want them to be married when we are,” said Constance ; “ that would surprise everybody so much, it would be like the close of ‘ Much Ado About Nothing ; ’ and I know Miss Alton would be bridesmaid if I were to ask her.”

“ What, next week, dear Constance ? Impossible ! ”

“ I don’t see that ; I’m sure stranger things happen every day.”

“ I don’t know how people really managed in Shakespeare’s time,” said Mary, laughing ; “ but in a play of course it was

easy to lead the ladies to church on the spot ; while in these days, think of the long train of preparation, the dresses ; the fittings on and counsellings that have taken place only about your gowns ; besides the endless sheets of parchment, which cannot quite be got ready in a week."

" I don't care," said Constance ; " all that may be done afterwards. Here comes Mr. Bohun ; I am sure he will be of my way of thinking."

Mr. Bohun laughed, and said that the thing was impossible ; that it was very likely she might possess skill enough to engage them, and he thought that she might rest satisfied with that triumph. He reminded her, that if she could persuade the principal people to postpone settlements and trousseaus, it would not be easy to gain over Mr. Hilton and Mrs. Blackwood to so unusual a step. Oh yes, he allowed it would form the one romantic feature in the life of Eustace, and Constance was of course actuated by a bene-

volent feeling to that gentleman's biographer; but when a thing was impossible, people had better give it up.

"I will not," said Constance; "I have set my mind on it."

Now Mr. Bohun knew by no little experience, that when Constance had set her mind on anything, she did not readily give it up; so he merely asked if she meant to assign him any part in the comedy, if he was to be Claudio or Don Pedro, or Leonatus or Balthazar, and finding that his services were not required, dismissed the matter as a good jest, that could not by any chance be turned into earnest. Constance informed him, with a lofty air, that she meant to play all the parts herself; and then as she should have all the trouble, she should be sure of all the praise, and then told him to make her a splendid nosegay, and put a little more heliotrope in it than he did last time. Miss Blackwood was gone upstairs, Eustace was loitering on the terrace; there

was nothing like beginning at once. She stepped through the glass doors, and joined him.

“ You have a long leave of absence, have not you, cousin ?” she began.

“ Two months,” said Eustace ; “ I wish it was a little later, because of hunting ; only, you see, Mary’s marriage ; and I shall get some good shooting at Hillsted.”

“ What a comfort that is, cousin ! Don’t you think Miss Blackwood a beautiful creature ?”

“ Yes, that is—I—she is very well connected, is she not ?”

“ First cousin to two Lords and one Baronet. I assure you I consider you a most fortunate person. Of course, it is very right to look confused ; but still it is easy to see—”

“ You always were so clever, Constance.”

“ Was I not ? Well, now how delightful it will be that you should be married on the same day with us, brother and

sister, you know. Indeed, it would not be quite proper to neglect such an opportunity."

"I am sure, as far as I am concerned," said Eustace, twisting his stick round and round, and looking very awkward, "I should be too happy; but you see I have not asked her yet; at least, not exactly."

"No, but you have sounded her. You can ask her when she is standing in the oriel window before dinner; she is sure to be there, among the camellias, you know."

"But she never will give her consent for next Wednesday week. Why this is Monday."

"She would not, of course, if it were not for the peculiar circumstances; but when you consider, your only sister going to be married on that day—"

"And the settlements?"

"She has nothing to be settled, so you may be quite easy on that head, and your writings and lawyers can be arranged afterwards. Why, if you were to run away

with anybody, how would you manage? You would not trouble your head about settlements?"

"Then I had better run away with her, hadn't I?"

"That is foolish, and wrong, besides; it is not creditable to run away with people. And would that, Sir, be the same thing as marrying on the same day with your sister?"

"No, true; but then, her dress?"

"Leave that to me."

"And I said I would be Bohun's bride-man."

"I will arrange that."

"And the old mother?"

"I will speak to her."

"And my governor?"

"Explain the matter to Mr. Hilton. Do you think, Sir, I am to have all the trouble?"

"I have not even a carriage."

"Uncle Hilton will lend you his, and go home by the railway."

“ And where are we to go to ? ”

“ To the Isle of Wight ; I should recommend Bonchurch.”

“ Then I'll tell you what, Constance, I can't. I think it would be very delightful, and all that, but I have not got a coat to be married in ; my dress coats are all black. I cannot bear myself in anything but black.”

“ You can bear yourself in blue or brown for half an hour, I suppose. Send to H—— and get one made.”

“ I dare say ; a pretty figure I should look in a coat made at H——.”

“ Write to London, then, coxcomb ! ”

“ A thousand to one they disappoint me, and then what should I do ? ”

“ And do you think,” said Constance, sitting down on one of the terrace seats, with an air of such dignity that she quite terrified Eustace, “ do you suppose that when I have arranged every thing and got rid of all the difficulties, that I am to be stopped by a coat ? You shall go without

one ; you shall wear a pinafore if I like it ! So don't let me hear one word against the H—— tailors."

" Well, I suppose I must," said Eustace. " I'll send my man to H—— to-night."

" I may speak to Mrs. Blackwood, then, before dinner ?"

" Do, please, Constance."

" Run into the hall, then ; Miss Blackwood will be there ; I see her fine head passing the staircase window."

" I will. She has a fine head," said Eustace, who knew as much about a fine head as he did of Sanscrit. He hurried into the hall ; Constance, still in her morning dress, darted upstairs to Mrs. Blackwood's dressing-room.

It was a good scene, though not a difficult one which she had to play. Mrs. Blackwood was a very worldly woman ; she knew Eustace to be a remarkably good match ; her daughter had beauty and connexions, the Hiltons great wealth ; and

they were of an old family, though Mr. Hilton was a banker. She received the news that Eustace adored her daughter, with a sigh and a smile ; talked of parting with her treasure as a natural occurrence, said she had always heard a very high character of Mr. E. Hilton, (she had never so much as heard his name before she came to Leyton) ; and hinted that she did not anticipate any opposition on the part of her daughter.

So far all was smooth. But when Constance, in her most caressing way, intimated that it was her cousin's fondest wish to be married on the same day as his sister, and she talked a great deal of nonsense too on the occasion ; ascribed to her dear cousin a great many feelings he would have been very much puzzled only to hear talked of ; and became quite eloquent on the fact of Mary and himself being the only two of the family, as if it was at once unusual and affecting for any one to possess so few children ; when, I say, this

part of her mission was announced, Mrs. Blackwood was indeed delighted with 'so amiable a trait in his character. But such extreme haste—the world would not like it, if even Camilla could be prevailed upon to yield to so beautiful a sentiment; and therefore, it could not be.

Constance paused a moment, and then drew nearer to Mrs. Blackwood.

“My dear Mrs. Blackwood,” said she, “Eustace is indeed a most amiable creature; the kindest heart, extremely beloved in his regiment, (his brother officers liked him and his dogs and horses well enough) but young men, you know—”

Mrs. Blackwood bent forward, all attention.

“The only fault he has, I do believe—he is rather changeable, that is all; and absence, you know—he leaves this part of the country after Mary's marriage, and there is no saying—I have seen instances, much as he admires Miss Blackwood now—”

It was very true; what a sensible girl

Miss D'Oyley was ! It would not signify a straw about his being ever so changeable after he had married her Camilla ; the only danger was beforehand. Some people would have thought the changing had better come before than after, but not so Mrs. Blackwood. There was a cause—a show of reason in the unusual haste ; and sometimes the world took it into its head to relish a little bit of sentiment, and nobody would know exactly how long they had been acquainted. Yes, she would do what she could for Mr. Eustace, he might depend on it. So affectionate a disposition, she dared say he would ever regret it if he was not married with his dear sister. What a beautiful collar of pearls was that which he had presented to Miss Hilton ! She thought she heard the dinner bell ; perhaps they had better go down stairs.

Constance thought so too. She had made no toilet, but that never distressed her, and now she was in mourning it mattered less than ever. It was late in-

deed ! Mr. Bohun was waiting with her nosegay at the foot of the stairs, she took it, and replied to his question of how she got on, by desiring him not to be inquisitive, and to give Mrs. Blackwood his arm.

As they passed through the hall, Constance glanced to the oriel windows, and saw that Eustace had been making the best use of his time ; it was easy to read by the glow on Miss Blackwood's oval cheek, and the light of triumph kindled in her fine black eyes, that she felt she had gained a prize, a step in society, a tribute to her beauty—the hand of Mr. Eustace Hilton !

Constance managed to secure the chair on the other side of Eustace ; her mamma always took the head of the table, and she congratulated him on the progress he had made.

“ Yes ; she has no objection, only she thinks a week so very quick.”

“ Ah ! I shall have a little conversation with her in the course of the evening.”

“ And what does the old lady say ?”

“She admires you very much; and she will be very glad if you marry her daughter in a week.”

“On my word that is very good of her.”

“Yes. You can have a sketch of settlements drawn up directly, you know.”

“And when am I to speak to the governor?”

“This evening, of course.”

“And what am I to say?”

“Oh! say what your heart dictates.”

“But really, I—”

“You don't think you have got such a thing. Never mind, it is unlucky, but you must endeavour to do without it. Exert yourself: recollect that Miss Blackwood is the handsomest woman in the county.”

“So she is. But, I say, what makes you so interested in the matter?”

“Because it amuses me. It gives me something to do.”

“Well, that of course. What do you think Bohun will say to it?”

“ He will say that you are a great deal more fortunate than you have any right to be.”

“ Not so fortunate as he is though !”

A pretty speech for a bridegroom.

“ Oh ! you mean on account of my property,” said Constance ; “ but to tell you the truth, we had both made up our minds before I had Leyton. Now don't speak any more, but sit thinking of what you mean to say to Mr. Hilton.”

Eustace obeyed her ; and the more willingly, as he felt he had something to think about. There was some difference between proposing to a young lady and coming to an understanding with his “ governor.”

Not being much of a diplomatist, he told his father he wanted to speak to him. Mr. Hilton, who was listening to a beautiful glee, merely told him that he might come to his room when the party broke up, and turned again to the piano, which delay

had the effect of making him so nervous, that when he did come to his father's dressing-room he did not know what to say, and threw down the fire-irons by way of beginning.

Mr. Hilton told him not to make that noise, and then sat down in an arm chair, looking very like a piece of wood. After a pause on both sides, it came into his head that his son was most probably in debt ; and as, to do him justice, he very seldom exceeded the munificent allowance his father made him, he looked as lenient as he could, and begged to know what was the matter.

As soon as his son disclosed to him his sudden attachment for Miss Blackwood, he said it was very well ; it was altogether a different thing from his affair with Miss Meredith. Here was a young woman whose appearance commanded respect, while her station in society made it at once advisable and pleasant to form such a connexion. He was glad to hear it : and now

he supposed Eustace would like to go to bed.

But when he heard that Eustace had made up his mind to marry this advisable young woman on the eventful Wednesday, he quite altered his tone, called Eustace a fool, and rang for his valet.

Eustace was not gifted with much power of persuasion ; he merely said that if he could not marry her on Wednesday, he would not have her at all ; that everybody else was quite willing, and that if the thing was ever to be, he did not know why it should not be immediately ; that, for his part, he did not see the use of waiting ; and that Miss Blackwood was the finest woman he had ever seen.

Mr. Hilton replied, that if he did not marry the lady in question, there would be no harm done ; that a young man of four and twenty could very well afford to wait a few years ; but that if he had such a particular fancy for that day and that lady, he had better marry at once ;—that

there was certainly something inconvenient and romantic in the proceeding ; but that, as these things seldom happened more than once in a person's life, such fancies were more excusable then, than at other times ; that he thought there was something in the air of Leyton ; for Constance had never turned romantic till she came there ; that he hoped Eustace would be very happy,—and he wished him good night.

Eustace was very much surprised and contented with this prompt acquiescence. It saved him the trouble of finding any more reasons ; which, as he had none at all to set out with, was rather convenient. He did not know that his father, who cared so little for Mary, was extravagantly and blindly fond of him ; and that Mr. Hilton, however easy he might have found it to deny any request of his by letter, was not proof against his most awkward attempts at persuasion.

He could not help stopping at his

cousin's door to give her notice of the success of his interview; and she desired him to go straight to Mr. Bohun, and beg him to recollect, that whenever she set her mind upon any thing, that was how she intended the affair to conclude.

Mr. Hilton having once acquiesced in the affair, proved himself of infinite use in its arrangement. He gave up his carriage as Constance had predicted; he came forward with funds; he made handsome presents to the beautiful *fiancée*; he expedited in a marvellous way the progress of her wardrobe, and showed himself in so amiable a light, that Constance told Mr. Bohun in confidence, that she hardly knew him to be the same person. But Mr. Hilton was in a remarkably good humour. Mary's marriage was in every sense an unexpected pleasure; and for his son's, he thought after all, now that he had fixed on so creditable an object, it was safer to take him at his word.

* * * *

There had not been such a sight in the village church, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. Three such marriages in one family, as you might almost call it, was an event for the whole county to talk of!

The wedding party almost filled the church. The churchyard was thronged with the poorer class of spectators, standing thickly on the graves;—a moral for those who liked to read it. The three brides were dressed exactly alike,—in white watered silk, with crowns of orange flowers and long veils. Mary surprised them all by her beauty. She had a colour, a most unwonted occurrence; and the white wreath contrasted strikingly with her shining raven hair. Constance was the most popular bride; her splendid complexion, and the glittering rings of her wild and beautiful hair were more likely to attract notice from the common people, than the most perfect regularity of form. Each one whispered

to the other as she passed along, that Miss D'Oyley looked like an angel; and her beauty was so enhanced by the white drapery with which she was surrounded, that the comparison might have seemed just to a more critical spectator.

Miss Blackwood looked and moved a Juno. Her profusion of dark hair, her large flashing eyes, her glowing complexion, and unusual height, made her a very excellent representative of the imperious goddess. The poor people kept mistaking her very naturally for Miss Hilton, the young lady who was going to be a Countess.

"Are you frightened, Mary?" whispered Constance, as they were all crowded near the altar before the ceremony began.

"No," said Mary, turning her clear hazel eyes upon her cousin.

"And you, Camilla?"

"Oh! don't speak to me.—I am so nervous!" said Miss Blackwood, settling the folds of her dress.

Constance fancied herself the bravest of the party. She had made up her mind a long time, and she came here to say so ;—that was all.

Mary's scarlet colour faded away inch by inch as the ceremony proceeded ; and Constance grew frightened from seeing every body else look grave, so that when she took Mr. Bohun's hand, she held it so fast, as if for protection against somebody else, that he could hardly get it away again. Miss Blackwood was by far the most composed. She whispered her responses, and wiped her eyes occasionally with her costly handkerchief, and used her silver-chased smelling-bottle whenever she could,—and really didn't mind it at all. She even remarked to Eustace after the ceremony with a pretty air of vexation, that she had inked her finger as she signed her name.

He stopped and pitied her, and then scrawled something which by courtesy was

allowed to pass in the register for "Eustace Hilton, his mark."

With regard to the gentlemen, Lord Bevis was earnest, Mr. Bohun tranquil, and Eustace, who was wishing for a cigar all the time, might be termed interesting. But fate, which has denied to Englishmen a costume at all worthy of a human being, has also decreed that they shall not shine to great advantage on any occasions of state and ceremony; they are not dramatic in the expression of their feelings, and therefore on an occasion like the present, everybody looks at the brides; every one feels that all the beauty and all the romance of the situation belongs to them.

And now the carriages drew up, the procession was arranged, the flower-girls strewed their scented blossoms, the curious groups in the churchyard pressed forward to catch a glimpse of the bridal party. Let us follow them. No, not be-

yond that portal; there let us leave the new-made brides, flowers beneath their feet, and above their heads the serene and cloudless Heaven.

CONCLUSION.

I RECOLLECT a remark made by a reviewer upon the character of a critic in one of Mr. Ward's admirable novels, to the effect that he shrewdly suspected Mr. Ward had suffered annoyance from some recent criticism, or he would not have drawn so severe a portrait of a critic ; thus insinuating that the description must be received with a grain of salt, (the phrase is classical), by all discreet readers.

It would seem a little strange, now, if a member of the House were to say something in disparagement of pickpockets, and were to be answered in full by a confident assurance that he had had his own pocket picked. " Nothing else, Sir, could make

you so inveterate against so respectable a body. Go to, you can be no dispassionate judge of the extent of the nuisance. You have lost your watch, or your note-case, or may be your pocket handkerchief, and you come down here to complain of pickpockets ! Marry, a fine witness ! a goodly testimony ! You know much about the matter, truly !”

Now, though it might occur to the bystanders that every one can master a grief but he who has it ; still, a word to the wise has always been considered sufficient, and I am careful to enter no protest against the critics ; but I should like to explain a little to those people who are kind enough to read my book through, what I have endeavoured to depict in it, because I know by experience that some of these gentlemen, I am sure with the very kindest intentions, will often ascribe to an author a good many sentiments that have no place in his thoughts, and certainly none in his pages.

It will be seen at once that the only two characters which pretend to more development than may belong to sketches are those of Constance and Isabel, and in these I have depicted, as I think, a fair specimen of the results of two kinds of education ; the one careful and conscientious—the other artificial and dishonest in every particular. The result is to be expected. It is not in the tranquil routine of daily life, that the great difference of such characters is to be detected by a common observer ; diseases of the mind, like those of the body, require something of a shock to bring them forward. It is, in a situation of difficulty and distress, that the one plunges from one falsehood to another, and at length seeks to extricate herself by an act of unmeasured treachery to her dearest friend. The integrity of the other, in a situation equally painful, leads her to the truest, the most beautiful source of consolation—the administering to the happiness of others. There is, however, one difference in the temperament of

these two women, which in a great degree influences both conduct and character. Constance is constitutionally courageous, Isabel is timid. So much has been said and is felt against any approach to the masculine character in women, that to advocate any thing so gentlemanly as bravery will lay me open to much censure, but, (apart from a very sincere and active religious principle), I do not know any quality so likely to elevate a character above doing wrong, as courage; anything so truly indispensable to that quiet steadfastness in well-doing, which is surely as essential to the weaker as to the more wilful sex. "For thereof comes all honour and all worth"—thereof comes the jewel truth, and that utter absence of selfishness which more than any other trait distinguishes a true woman. And I wish women would be convinced, when that delicate and sensitive cherishing of self is commended, that people are extolling a very bad specimen of a man, perhaps even

something removed as far as possible from that which should be the ornament or the characteristic of a feminine disposition.

And now to say a few words in extenuation of the faults which must be evident to all. In my opinion, one of the greatest faults of which a novel can be guilty is, to be dull; and in three volumes it is scarcely to be hoped that I shall not have often committed this fault. But in these days it is the fashion to write three volumes, neither more nor less—nobody can be out of the fashion; our thoughts or our words must cover so many sheets of paper, and therefore it is, that many a story is beaten out thin to meet the inexorable demands of the printer. A poor author must cudgel his brains if he mean to coin them, with the pleasing conviction ever before his eyes, that “your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating.”

If this hint of our necessities should serve to excuse some few of the deficiencies you

must needs encounter in the pages before you, ladies and gentlemen, I shall hold myself much indebted to your patience and courtesy.

THE NEW COMERS.

THE NEW COMERS.

“WELL, and what is she like?” asked Miss Smith, as she met Mrs. Brown coming out of the iron gates that led to Mrs. Alison’s house.

“Not at home!” replied Mrs. Brown settling the gold pins in her cuffs, with an air of great vexation.

“She never is at home. Do you think she denies herself on purpose?” asked Miss Smith.

“I don’t know; the man said she always drove out at this hour.”

“Now that is such an air,” returned

Miss Smith, "always to go out at a certain hour. And who are they?"

"Oh! Heaven knows! somebody said the husband was a green-grocer."

"Mr. Brook told me he was a wine-merchant," said Miss Smith; "but then Mr. Brook is such an old gossip."

"Hateful old man, so he is! There he goes to cheapen his daily mutton chop at the butcher's."

"How do you do, my dear Miss Mansel? Do you know any thing of these Alisons?"

"Not personally, my dear Mrs. Brown; they were out when we called. Mrs. Hartley told me she was a great beauty."

"What, Mrs. Alison! why was not that she at church with the ugly lilac bonnet?"

"It was Mrs. Alison at church," Miss Mansel said; "but she had not thought the lilac bonnet ugly; in fact she thought it decidedly the prettiest bonnet in the church; but she had not been able to obtain a glimpse of the face beneath."

“ Well then, my dear,” said Mrs. Brown with an air of triumph, “ I can tell you she is no beauty ; her mouth is too large. I never could see any beauty in a person with a large mouth.”

Mrs. Brown’s mouth was a little thin aperture, that would barely serve her to talk and eat with : but as she, in common with almost every one, had been called pretty at some time, and by somebody, she was greatly enraged when she heard any one called a beauty, and invariably gave her very earnest and decided negative to the proposition.

Miss Mansel had never been tried by too much praise ; she was honest and reserved, two very unpopular qualities. She was a great admirer of beauty in others, having none herself, and she said she was sorry to hear that Mrs. Alison was not beautiful : she had promised herself a great treat in seeing her. This reply put Mrs. Brown out of temper, as most straightforward replies do ; but Miss Smith stopped Miss Mansel

who was saying good bye, and asked if Mr. Alison was a wine merchant after all?

“No,” Miss Mansel said, “he was in no way of business whatever.”

“Then how did he live?” Mrs. Brown wondered.

“On his fortune,” Miss Mansel thought.

Mrs. Brown believed he was, or had been, a green-grocer.

Miss Mansel said she had had her information from Mrs. Hartley who was intimate with all the Alison family.

“Oh! that disagreeable Mrs. Hartley!” was Mrs. Brown’s rejoinder.

Miss Mansel thought that Mrs. Hartley’s powers of attraction had nothing to do with the simple fact which she had stated; and as she liked Mrs. Hartley, she made no reply.

Mrs. Brown, still more angrily said she saw she was detaining Miss Mansel, and wished her good morning, and in the same breath asked her whither she was going in such a hurry.

Miss Mansel replied that she was going to call on the Hammonds, and that she was in haste, that her visit might be paid before their early dinner hour.

So she left Mrs. Brown highly enraged against her ; for whenever Mrs. Brown asked a question, it put her into a passion if the people did not make her exactly the reply she had framed in her own mind ; and she had wanted Miss Mansel to say that she was not in a hurry at all, and that she should like to have a little more conversation about these new comers.

“ How stupid she grows ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Brown to Miss Smith. “ She has no more manner than a housemaid.”

“ Poor thing,” said Miss Smith, “ she is very plain, certainly.”

“ And pretending all that admiration for beauty, my dear Miss Smith ! Why you and I know that it is all because she affects to be fond of drawing heads.”

“ And I don’t think it is quite proper,” faltered Miss Smith ; “ because one is not

sure that it is strictly confined to our own sex, all this admiration."

"You are a sensible girl, Miss Smith," said Mrs. Brown.

The Hammonds liked Miss Mansel, and she showed to more advantage in their pleasant, frank society. Her face lighted up as she was shown into a morning room rather disordered with an appearance of lessons, with four fine girls of different ages lounging round the table. The eldest played at teaching the three younger ones, and was distinguished by a black silk apron tied over her pink frock instead of the holland pinafores of the others.

"Ah, ah! sister Theresa," cried one, starting from her chair, "here she comes, sister Theresa; and has she brought back the lace pattern she stole from me, the little thief!"

And all her long uncurled locks of light hair fell back like ribbons, as she hung round Miss Mansel's neck, and looked up in her face.

“Here it is, Fanny dear, let me go and speak to Grace. Gracy, lessons are all over now.”

“Do say lessons are over, now that Theresa is come,” said Lydia, tossing books and slates into a heap on the table.

“Oh ! thank goodness, yes ! lessons are over for to-day,” said Grace, pushing her share of the books towards the general heap. “I am as glad as any of you. Come and sit close by me, Theresa. How are all at home ?”

“All well, darling ! thank you ;” said Theresa to Adela the little silent one, the youngest of the four sisters, who had stolen to the window directly she saw Miss Mansel enter, and now brought her a fragrant cluster of jessamine. “How lovely she grows, yes, tell her so Gracy, what is the use of hiding it ? You are lovely, dear one.”

“Look at her, with her great earnest eyes,” said Lydia.

“How I like to hear you talk, Theresa,

you seem so to mean what you say. Mrs. Brown told us yesterday that she was going off like the rest of us: we were a plain family, and that was the truth."

"Oh! Theresa," cried Fanny, "have you seen Mrs. Alison? Mrs. Brown, nasty thing, persuaded mamma not to call; she said they lived in a style so much above ours; talked of their dinners and their carriages, and all that: and she is so beautiful, this Mrs. Alison."

"And how she dresses!" exclaimed Lydia. "If I am rich when I grow up, I will dress exactly like her, with a Barèges shawl down to my feet, and a watered silk standing out all round like hers."

"And a low carriage," said Grace, "with such a pair of grey ponies; only would not I make them go a great deal faster than she does?"

"And a poodle, oh! you forgot the poodle," said Fanny, "as white as milk, with a long rose coloured ribbon, and not

shaved like that cross old dog of Mrs. Hartley's, but covered with long hair like a little muff. Oh! I think I shall steal the poodle!"

"I wish we were rich," said Grace, laughing; "fancy our old chaise, which I always say will come in two when old grey Time begins to pull it along, and which even old Tom Happer is quite ashamed to bring round to the front door; and yet if mamma had not that, she must walk, which would be very inconvenient when she wants to go shopping to R——."

"She is gone there to-day," said little Adela softly, "to buy me a straw bonnet."

"What would Mrs. Alison say, I wonder," continued Grace still laughing, "to our pink frocks, and coarse straw bonnets, or those dismal gowns we had for winter, which you allowed yourself, Theresa, were just the colour of gingerbread."

"Yes, I said so, but I thought them very neat, with your plain cuffs and collars," said Miss Mansel.

"But only fancy us, with our belongings, visiting Mrs. Alison. I believe old Mrs. Brown was right after all," said Grace.

"Well, your comfort is," said Theresa, "that if she depends on carriages and Barèges shawls, you have escaped a very tiresome acquaintance."

"Perhaps she does not though," said Lydia. "See her riding on horseback with the wind catching her long dark ringlets, and blowing them back over the rim of her hat! She looks so bold with her proud aquiline nose. No, not bold exactly—I mean—I can't express it."

"I wish I had seen her," said Miss Mansel.

"My hair never will keep in curl," said Fanny, "isn't it tiresome? just look at all these obstinate strips."

"Band it, dear."

"What with my wide face? An Irish face is not it? Mamma has done that for us, we have all her Irish face."

“ Here ! Theresa, quick ; here comes Mrs. Alison in her low carriage.”

“ Stay, my little Adela, I’ll tie it for you in a moment, I must have one look at this beautiful Mrs. Alison.”

“ Oh ! Theresa, she is gone. Just turned the corner, what a pity !”

“ She had on a black velvet mantle,” said Lydia.

“ And a pair of yellow gloves,” said Fanny.

“ And such a pretty bonnet,” cried Lydia.

“ A fancy straw, with a purple feather,” echoed Fanny.

“ And violets inside,” said Lydia.

“ I wish I had such a one, I know,” remarked Fanny.

“ That will do : don’t bore Theresa about the bonnet,” said Grace.

“ Now I will tell you how many bonnets she has got,” said Lydia.

“ As if you knew !” cried Grace ; “ come

here, Theresa, let me show you our new waltzes."

"My time is up; I must make haste home," said Theresa.

"No, no! stay and dine with us! we shall have dinner in two minutes!" said Grace.

"I can't really to-day."

"We won't let you go, sister Theresa," cried the others, "we have such a nice dinner to-day: chickens and—"

"Nonsense," said Grace, "Theresa does not care for the dinner; but she will stay."

"Can't indeed!"

"But your mamma has Agnes and Jane with her."

"Yes, but she wants me to write a letter before post-time."

"Can't Agnes do it?"

"No, my little Fanny.

"Well, come again soon, sister Theresa."

“Come to-morrow,” whispered little Adela, as she gave her a parting kiss.

The drawing-room at home was quite full when Miss Mansel returned. Of course the first name that met her ear was Mrs. Alison.

Somebody asked as usual, “Who are they?”

Theresa saw that Miss Grove had put the question; and it set her thinking who was Miss Grove? And so very little dignity was attached to the few forefathers that Miss Grove was ever known to possess, that she thought perhaps Miss Grove was less reasonable than many women might have been in the particularity of her inquiries. But Miss Grove was a great many years older than Miss Mansel, and therefore knew better. Perhaps she knew that to be exceedingly contemptuous towards other people, and extremely fastidious towards those who were abundantly qualified by birth and education to associate with her,

was a very excellent way to make people in general think that she was a very exalted personage. It is so natural to place you above those you despise.

Miss Mansel's younger brother used to call Miss Grove a humbug; but what could you expect of a boy who had hardly left school?

Miss Grove had seen Mrs. Alison, for she had been at home when that lady returned her call. "She did not take a drive at a stated hour every day." To be sure she had nothing to drive in, which might in some measure account for her not falling into that bad habit.

Miss Mansel immediately crossed over and sat down by Miss Grove. She confessed that she felt curious respecting Mrs. Alison. "Was she beautiful?"

"Oh! dear no, she might be called a fine woman."

"Was she fascinating in her manners?"

"Not at all." Miss Grove had not been at all struck with her manners.

“Perhaps her conversation was very attractive.”

“Not at all.” Miss Grove thought that Mrs. Alison aimed at being thought foreign.

Several ladies here exclaimed: “shocking!” and one feared that Mrs. Alison was a great flirt. One said that Mrs. Alison sat all church time last Sunday, and had not been to church at all the Sunday before.

Another thought she looked dashing; and another remarked that her style of dress was preposterous in a quiet village like theirs.

Mrs. Harding, drawing up one side of her mouth, said she wondered at their coming into a place without introductions.

Miss Mansel said, that they were intimate with the Hartleys.

“Yes, but then the Hartleys,” said Mrs. Harding with her well-known expression of mouth, “they are not quite all the neighbourhood.”

“ Only that as we all know the Hartleys, it might serve as an introduction to us,” said Theresa quietly.

“ I don’t know, I am sure,” said Mrs. Harding.

She was getting angry in her turn. Poor Theresa, without knowing it, generally contrived to make somebody angry. She thought that by explaining what she said she made her meaning clearer ; they thanked her for nothing,—by that means she was constantly giving check-mate to all their fault-finding.

“ And when did you call, pray ?” asked Mrs. Harding.

“ On Monday.”

“ And this is Friday, two days I believe, after the prescribed time for returning first visits. Those who like such airs may put up with them. I am glad I never called.”

“ Mrs. Alison is often an invalid,” said Theresa, “ and that may easily account for the delay.”

“I dare say,” said Mrs. Harding ironically.

Theresa was growing weary. What had poor Mrs. Alison done, she wondered, to all these people. She got up, said that she was pledged to write a letter by post time, and shut herself in her own room.

It never came into her head that because Mrs. Alison was young, rich, and beautiful, every one felt as if she had done them some great personal injury. She thought, that in spite of these singular advantages, she must have something disagreeable about her, which none of these ladies could overlook.

In about an hour’s time, her sister Jane knocked at her door.

“Oh! Theresa,” she said, “do you know, Mrs. Alison has just called. Mamma was out, so she sent in her card, *et voilà*.”

She threw one down before her sister, which contained a few words written in pencil.

It was a request that the young ladies would drink tea with her, that evening, without ceremony, as she had not been fortunate enough to find them at home.

“Let us go by all means,” said Theresa. “I was beginning to fear I should never see this beautiful Mrs. Alison. I would not lose the opportunity for a world ; I am sure I shall like her.”

It was a summer evening, and as the Mansels drove up to Mrs. Alison’s door, the sound of music came through the open-curtained windows. It was a delicious voice, peculiar in its wild sweetness. Mrs. Alison was singing. She rose from the piano ; came through two or three gentlemen who were clustered round her, and greeted the sisters.

“It is so very kind of you to come up to see me in this unceremonious way.”

Theresa was astonished — her beauty was dazzling—it was of that kind of which Shakspeare must have dreamed of, or have seen when he wrote those beautiful lines :

When, in the chronicle of wasted time,
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,
In praise of ladies dead, and lovely knights ;
Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have express'd
Even such a beauty as you master now.

Mrs Alison was very tall, of that slender and graceful structure which poets are apt to attribute to Diana. Her slender throat carried her head up from her shoulders, with that peculiar air of delicacy and wild grace, that may be seen perhaps in the partridge as much as in any thing—that inimitably shy and startled expression, which brings the tiny head into a thousand new positions each more elegant than the last. Her complexion was splendid—her hair had the gloss and texture of an infant's—her large grey eyes sparkled like jewels beneath their long black fringes, and there was a force and precision in the sharp lines of the nose and the slight curved lip, that gave perfection at once to the outline and

the detail of the face. And then what a cheek—what a chin—what a forehead in its clear wide ivory surface—what eyebrows lined, and almost painted upon the pure skin ! Her beauty was perfectly amazing—when she spoke—when she listened—when she was silent—there was no end to its change : as she threw herself into a corner of the sofa and began to talk to Theresa of the village, the books on the table—the flowers—her pet birds—in every new posture, every new inflexion of her bewitching voice there seemed a separate charm.

And her mind seemed as fresh, as bright, as highly finished as her person. She could touch on nothing that she did not adorn ; she seemed familiar with every passing topic ; and to each she gave a novelty and a grace that showed she possessed no ordinary intellect. She was not learned ; but where was the use of learning to a creature who possessed more power, by the free gift of nature, than others can acquire by a life's laborious toil ? People

(that is to say, Lord Bacon) once said that knowledge is power, so it was when it was scarce ; but when things become plentiful they lose all their charm.

Beauty, such as her's, must ever be most scarce, and it is almost the only sceptre left on earth. Theresa wondered again and again, that every one had not been as much astonished, as much enraptured as herself. She thought that such beauty, that such entire fascination, could have but one effect, could call forth but one voice of admiring praise. Really Theresa, though not grey-haired, was old enough to have known better ; to have known that, in the first place, common people cannot understand the higher orders of merit at all ; and that secondly, when they find out that it does exist, it is a source of annoyance and irritation, that it has been given to some one else instead of to them. When a very rich person is mentioned, people try to convince themselves and each other, that he is not half

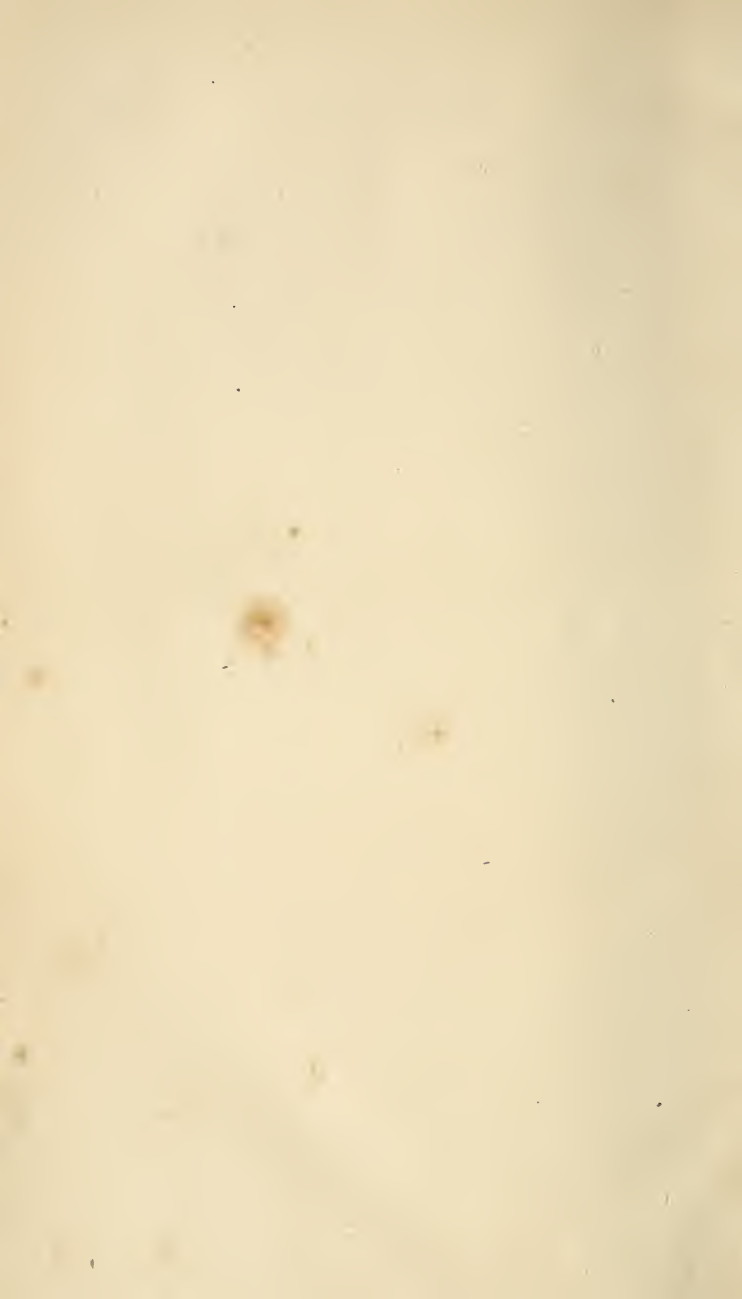
so rich as he is reported ; and when a very beautiful woman comes on the tapis, surely it is equally natural to talk her out of every boasted charm which she may possess, and to pull her down to their level, since it would be vain indeed to think of aspiring to her's.

THE END.

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